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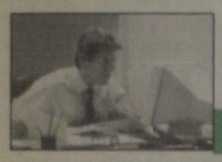

Software upgrades and chasing after wind ... p. 13

Jesus in the Badlands: Alberta's Passion Play ..... p. 7

55th year of publication

Hope for Tanzanian girls threatened by genital mutilation and early marriage

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Yolanda Mol-Amelink

MISSISSAUGA, Ont. — *Twenty years in Africa and deep roots in the Reformed faith are helping Canadian Dirk Booy build vision and hope in Eastern Africa.*

When Kidawa heard rumours that her stepfather had promised her in marriage, and her future husband was now planning to take her as his wife, she ran and hid in the forest near her home in Tanzania. The seventeen-year old girl was stunned.

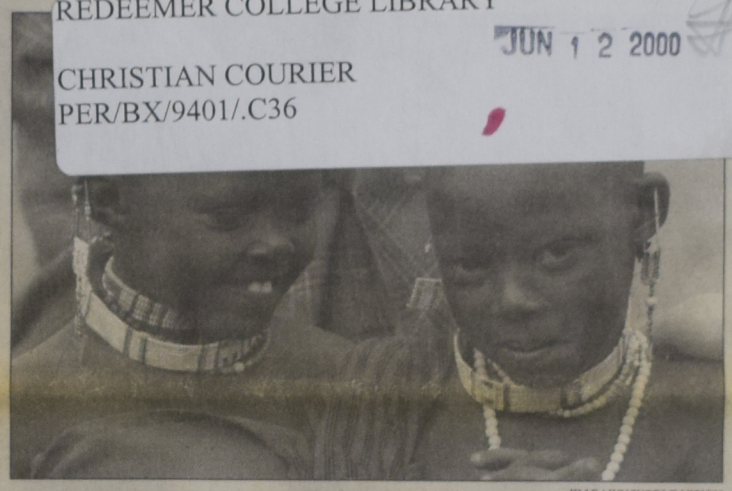
She had just passed her primary examinations and was selected to enter secondary school. Kidawa was the only Maasai girl of 72 applicants chosen for admission from her region. She thought her future was set, but Kidawa was a Maasai.

The Maasai are a nation of 250,000 pastoral, nomadic people in southern Kenya and Tanzania that have historically promised their daughters in marriage at a young age or even before birth. The tradition would surely bring a swift end to Kidawa's studies and her dreams of becoming a secretary.

Putting relationships first

It is girls such as Kidawa who inspire Dirk Booy, World Vision's national director for Tanzania, to continue to work for change. But, during his visit to Canada earlier this month, Booy explained that change must be made in the context of the culture in which one works. Raised in Quebec and Ontario after his family landed as Dutch emigrants in Halifax in the 1950s, it was his commitment to serve God which motivated Booy to start his career with Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC) in Sierra Leone after graduation from Calvin College in the early1980s.

After twenty years in Africa, Booy, now 42, knows that what works in western culture — getting the most done in the least amount of time — doesn't always work in Tanzania. The only Westerner managing a local staff of 300, he now focuses on putting relationships first. He said that much of the vision for development programs he now manages are influenced by annual conferences organized to help the poor voice their opinions on what's needed in Tanzania.



JIM RAWN/WORLD VISION

Poverty and harmful traditional practices cloud the future for many tribal girls in Tanzania such as these two Maasai girls.

Traditional practices such as early marriage have been among some of the more common challenges discussed among Tanzanian children who attend the annual conferences. It is out of these discussions, said Booy, that the agency realized the need for programs which focused on the unique challenges Tanzanian girls face.

Thus, in 1998, World Vision launched a development program focused on the girl child, choosing to target two of the most serious issues where they felt they could make a valuable difference. "Our goal right now is to make a major impact on the practice of female genital mutilation (FGM) and increase the number of girls going through secondary school education," says Booy. "Beyond that, I'd like to see girl-children making a real difference on a national level."

One million girls not in school

Increasing girls' enrollment in secondary education extends beyond the issue of early marriage.

See **CHANGING** *page 2...*

Poll shows high levels of belief, low church attendance

Alan Doerksen

TORONTO — Although a high percentage of Canadians believe in God and salvation from sin through Jesus, a much smaller number attend church regularly, according to a recent Angus Reid opinion poll. Pollster Andrew Grenville, senior vice-president for the Angus Reid Group, sees these results as reflecting a major shift in Canadian society from a "we mentality" to a "me mentality."

Churchgoing not needed

The survey, conducted in mid-April, showed that eight in ten (81 per cent) of those surveyed agreed "I don't think you need to go to church in order to be a good Christian," and 70 per cent agreed "My private beliefs about Christianity are more important than what is taught by any church."

ALAN DOERKSEN

Andrew Grenville, of the Angus Reid Group, at a recent Faith and the Media conference.

Weekly attenders of religious services were less likely to agree with this statement. However, even so, a clear majority of weekly attenders (62 per cent) agreed with it.

Belief in God is one thing most Canadians agree on, reports the survey. A full 84 per cent answered "yes" when asked, "Do you believe in God?" Only 14 per cent said they do not believe in God, while the remaining two per cent said they were unsure.

On the other hand, just one in five (20 per cent) attend church on a weekly basis. One third (36 per cent) did not attend religious services in the past year.

Grenville observes that numbers of church attenders have plummeted since World War II, and explains, "This has a lot to do with a shift from a 'we mentality' to a 'me mentality.' There's been a decline in participation in volunteer organizations... The second element is, there has been a lack of trust developed in all institutions — a decline of confidence in politicians, in unions. People are more wary of those larger groups." These include churches.

People impoverished

Grenville, who attends a United Church in Toronto, sees a problem with this way of thinking. "When people move away from the church, they're impoverished as a result," he contends. "You don't have the teaching, the chance to talk things over, the support, all the things that are there to nurture your faith. You don't get the positive reinforcement."

Don Posterski, Vice-President of World Vision Canada, says the survey results are "consistent with what Canadians have been saying for a decade. We have

See **MANY** *page 2...*

News

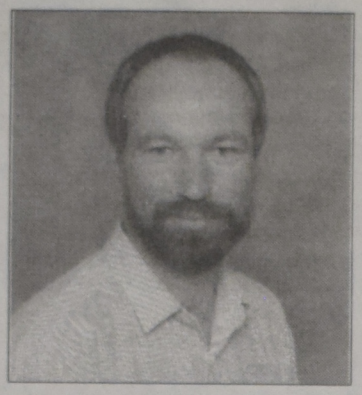
Changing age-old practices difficult in Tanzania

... continued from page 1

Given that schools will often illegally expel pregnant girls, or encourage girls to study only gender-biased studies, it's no wonder one million girls in Tanzania are not in school.

Parents limit girls' education

Parents also play an important part in low enrollment rates among girl-children. Practices such as making housework, rather than schoolwork, a priority for daughters, or paying for a son's schooling first, often limits a girl's education. Families also stand to gain by agreeing to a daughter's early marriage. In some of the poorer regions, the promise of instant wealth that comes with a dowry is hard for a parent to turn down. A family also stands to risk its reputation if a daughter is found pregnant out of wedlock — another incentive to ensure girls are securely married at puberty.



WORLD VISION

Dirk Booy

Changing age-old practices and attitudes however is difficult. Booy and his staff work directly with the opinion-makers — fathers, community leaders and educators. And it takes time to build trust with leaders such as Stanley Lenusunya. Lenusunya, 52, has been chairman of the Isangha village for the last 20 years. He is now a member of a committee that works with World Vision to manage development projects in Mpunguzi region and leads the local fight against FGM, a cultural practice that removes one or several parts of a female's genitalia.

Life-long health risks

The practice yields life-long health risks and serious social and psychological consequences. He says, "Ten years ago, if a girl was not circumcised she was not regarded a woman and would not be married, and it was believed that she would not be able to give birth properly." Lenusunya has refused to have his two youngest daughters circumcised. Although he considers himself a traditional man, Lenusunya draws the line at female circumcision because he now knows the negative consequences of the ritual.

Developing alternatives

World Vision meanwhile is working with the community to develop an alternative practice to FGM as one of many strategies aimed at eradicating the practice. The new ritual would eliminate mutilation and thus the health risk to girls while maintaining the traditional rite of passage from girlhood to womanhood that the ritual represents. The development agency also realizes the need to address practitioners who rely on the income received from performing the mutilation and the female elders and relatives who may ostracize any girl who does not undergo the ritual.

A message of hope

What Booy also talks about when discussing the lives of children in Tanzania, is hope. Booy admits that some of the struggles he has witnessed while working in Tanzania and Sierra Leone are indescribable, but through that, he delivers a message of hope. It is the hope he finds in Romans 5. It's a passage he says brings him personal encouragement that God continues to work through him and his working in Africa. ("But we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulations bring about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope." Romans 5:3-4)

Hope is also what Kidawa now has. After learning of her husbands' plan, local World Vision workers intervened. The police consequently arrested Kidawa's potential in-laws for their efforts to obstruct her education and issued orders so that she might continue her studies. Anyone who now attempts to intervene without her consent is subject to imprisonment. She is happily studying at Longido Secondary School in Tanzania.

Yolanda Mol-Amelink is a freelance writer based in Toronto. She works for World Vision Canada at the national office in Mississauga.

Many Canadians disenchanted with, disengaged from churches

... continued from page 1

continuity.... Canadians have not changed how they respond to God as an idea or object." But church-attenders tend to correlate belief with church attendance, while non-attenders do not, he observes.

The survey reflects the attitudes of Canadians who have become "disenchanted with the church, then disengaged from the church." But it is also the "high expression of individualization" characteristic of evangelical Christians.

Posterski agrees with Grenville that church attendance is important, and helps improve marriages and encourage more charitable giving, for instance.

'How do you behave?'

But he notes, "We're asking people 'What do you think?' questions" rather than "How do you behave?" Posterski asserts, "We need to ask, 'What's the content of the belief?'"

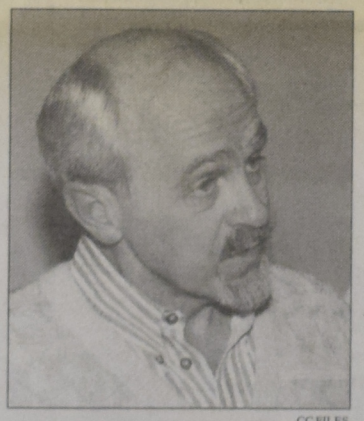
> ***"God is not a deceiver, that he should offer to support us, and then, when we lean upon Him, should slip away from us."***
>
> **St. Augustine (354-430)**

Gene Haas, Professor of Religion and Theology at Redeemer College in Ancaster, Ont., sees "privatization of religious belief as a legacy of the Enlightenment,"which began in the 18th century. "Religion becomes a private affair." This privatization also reflects a "consumer mentality" which means, says Haas: "I construct my own religion. I want something that meets my needs."

Church's role reduced

Unlike the US, where there is a strong concept of the separation of church and state, Canada has traditionally had closer connections between the two, says Haas. But as Canada has become more secularized, the church's role has been reduced.

The Atlantic provinces show the highest level of belief in God (93 per cent) and the largest percent of weekly attenders (28 per cent). British Columbia stands out as the least religious province in Canada, with 75 per cent reporting belief in God and 18 per cent attending church weekly. Quebeckers stand apart in that they have high levels of belief (85 per cent believe in God) but the lowest levels of church attendance (15 per cent).



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World Vision Vice-President Don Posterski

The Great Awakening

Grenville interprets the East Coast results to be "a leftover from the Great Awakening [of the late 18th and early 19th centuries]. It was a profound event that started the ball rolling, and the effect continued." He interprets the low percentages in B.C. as reflecting "the frontier thesis: people who are questioning things tend to move to the new frontier." B.C. is that frontier, says Grenville, and has many "disaffected folk moving there."

The extremely low levels of church attendance in Quebec are related to the Quiet Revolution of the 1960s, when he says "there was a tremendous drop-off" in church attendance there.

Looking at these regional variations, Posterski observes, "It's a long-standing Canadian Reality that the Maritimes are the most practising religious area in Canada, and the west coast is the least." He sees B.C. as being somewhat of a Canadian California, with "a materialistic identity that's more predominant."

Born Catholic in Quebec

In Quebec, "When you are born a Catholic, you are Catholic in your soul until you die.... There's a Catholic culture that gets passed on. You might compare the religious reaction in Quebec to what happens to young people when they're over-controlled." The sharp drop-off of church attendance in Quebec reflects the "controlling influences of the church" in the late 1950s, and also "the 1960s rebellion against authority of any kind."

The church is strong in Atlantic Canada because "that area tends to be most stable in population," Haas contends. "In that setting, you'd get social reinforcement" of religious beliefs. But in B.C., the opposite is true. Because it was settled more recently, "you get the loss of those reinforcements."

"Quebec is a unique case because of the Quiet Revolution," says Haas. "The new religion is nationalism, politics." Although Catholicism is a strong part of Quebec's identity, some Quebeckers have felt "the church was holding them back," he says.

Many believe resurrection

Seven in ten (69 per cent) Canadians surveyed agreed that through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, God provided a way for the forgiveness of their sins. A similar number (67 per cent) said that their religious faith is very important to their day to day life. But those numbers have not translated into high church attendance, and Haas observes that for many people "religion supplies inner peace and comfort."

Grenville says the survey shows "people being alienated from the church. The churches have not done a good job of advertising what they do and meeting people where they are. I think churches in Canada need to make significant changes to stay relevant."

The April survey was co-sponsored by CTV and the *Globe and Mail*, and was based on a randomly selected sample of 1,500 adult Canadians.

For a quick Letter to the Editor, please send it by fax to: (905) 682-8313, or by e-mail to: cceditor@aol.com

News/Politics

Religious conservatives launch own environmental organization

WASHINGTON, D.C. (Religion Today) — Religious conservatives have started their own environmental organization. A group of prominent clergy and ministry leaders led by James Dobson of Focus on the Family announced formation of the *Interfaith Council for Environmental Stewardship* this week in Washington, D.C. They issued what they called the Cornwall Declaration on Environmental Stewardship stating their principles.

Signers included Jerry Falwell of Liberty University; D. James Kennedy of Coral Ridge Ministries; Richard Land of the Southern Baptist Convention; Rabbi Daniel Lapin, a conservative Jewish activist; Catholic priest Richard John Neuhaus of the magazine *First Things*; and Robert Sirico, a Catholic priest who is president of the *Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty*. It was the first such major statement conservative evangelicals have made on the environment, news reports said.

People should "care wisely and humbly for all creatures, first and foremost for their fellow human beings, recognizing their proper place in the created order," signers of the declaration said.

Too radical

The group criticized much of the environmental movement as too radical. It said environmentalists too often base their actions on "faulty science and economics, strident street theater, and demands for immediate, drastic action on problems that are often hypothetical or overstated." Its list of "Aspirations" includes: "We aspire to a world in which liberty as a condition of moral action is preferred over government-initiated management of the environment as a means to common goals." This is clearly critical of much environmental activism, which often seeks government legislation to protect the environment.

Here is the opening section of the declaration (the entire document can be found at **www.acton.org**):

Cornwall Declaration

The past millennium brought unprecedented improvements in human health, nutrition, and life expectancy, especially among those most blessed by political and economic liberty and advances in science and technology. At the dawn of a new millennium, the opportunity exists to build on these advances and to extend them to more of the earth's people.

At the same time, many are concerned that liberty, science, and technology are more a threat to the environment than a blessing to humanity and nature. Out of shared reverence for God and His creation and love for our neighbors, we Jews, Catholics, and Protestants, speaking for ourselves and not officially on behalf of our respective communities, joined by others of good will, and committed to justice and compassion, unite in this declaration of our common concerns, beliefs, and aspirations.

Our concerns

Human understanding and control of natural processes empower people not only to improve the human condition but also to do great harm to each other, to the earth, and to other creatures. As concerns about the environment have grown in recent decades, the moral necessity of ecological stewardship has become increasingly clear. At the same time, however, certain misconceptions about nature and science, coupled with erroneous theological and anthropological positions, impede the advancement of a sound environmental ethic. In the midst of controversy over such matters, it is critically important to remember that while passion may energize environmental activism, it is reason — including sound theology and sound science — that must guide the decision-making process. We identify three areas of common misunderstanding:

Many people mistakenly view humans as principally consumers and polluters rather than producers and stewards. Consequently, they ignore our potential, as bearers of God's image, to add to the earth's abundance. The increasing realization of this potential has enabled people in societies blessed with an advanced economy not only to reduce pollution, while producing more of the goods and services responsible for the great improvements in the human condition, but also to alleviate the negative effects of much past pollution. A clean environment is a costly good; consequently, growing affluence, technological innovation, and the application of human and material capital are integral to environmental improvement. The tendency among some to oppose economic progress in the name of environmental stewardship is often sadly self-defeating.

Stewardship unlocks potential in creation

Many people believe that 'nature knows best,' or that the earth — untouched by human hands — is the ideal. Such romanticism leads some to deify nature or oppose human dominion over creation. Our position, informed by revelation and confirmed by reason and experience, views human stewardship that unlocks the potential in creation for all the earth's inhabitants as good.

Humanity alone of all the created order is capable of developing other resources and can thus enrich creation, so it can properly be said that the human person is the most valuable resource on earth. Human life, therefore, must be cherished and allowed to flourish. The alternative — denying the possibility of beneficial human management of the earth — removes all rationale for environmental stewardship.

Greatly exaggerated

While some environmental concerns are well founded and serious, others are without foundation or greatly exaggerated. Some well-founded concerns focus on human health problems in the developing world arising from inadequate sanitation, widespread use of primitive biomass fuels like wood and dung, and primitive agricultural, industrial, and commercial practices; distorted resource consumption patterns driven by perverse economic incentives; and improper disposal of nuclear and other hazardous wastes in nations lacking adequate regulatory and legal safeguards. Some unfounded or undue concerns include fears of destructive man-made global warming, overpopulation, and rampant species loss.

Public policies to combat exaggerated risks can dangerously delay or reverse the economic development necessary to improve not only human life but also human stewardship of the environment. The poor, who are most often citizens of developing nations, are often forced to suffer longer in poverty with its attendant high rates of malnutrition, disease, and mortality; as a consequence, they are often the most injured by such misguided, though well-intended, policies.

Declaration too concerned with private property

Principalities & Powers
David T. Koyzis

A few months ago I received via e-mail a document called "The Cornwall Declaration on Environmental Stewardship" from the *Acton Institute* in Grand Rapids, Michigan, with the request that I read and consider signing it. The document was co-sponsored by the Institute and the Interfaith Council for Environmental Stewardship, both of which take a generally free market approach to issues of public policy and claim to represent concerned Catholics, Protestants and Jews mostly in the United States.

To be honest, I cannot consider myself an expert on environmental issues, so I usually feel at something of a loss to evaluate the claimed consequences of global warming, ozone layer depletion, soil erosion and water pollution. On such issues I usually defer to my colleague Dr. Henry Brouwer, who has devoted his life and energies to encouraging an awareness of environmental concerns.

An appropriate concern

At the same time, as a political scientist I recognize that the environment is an appropriate concern for public policy makers. Thus the Cornwall Declaration deserves a response.

To begin with, there is much to like about it. I can agree with the drafters' efforts to articulate an approach free from much of the romanticizing – or even deifying – of nature that is part and parcel of the contemporary ecological movement. As the Declaration rightly states, human beings are stewards of creation rather than intruders upon it. Human stewardship involves the proper unlocking of creation's potential. In fact, "humanity alone of all the created order is capable of developing other resources and can thus enrich creation, so it can properly be said that the human person is the most valuable resource on earth. Human life, therefore, must be cherished and allowed to flourish."

A potent argument

This is a potent argument against those who would ground environmental activities in an almost mystical belief in a balance of nature excluding an apparently disruptive human presence. It also affirms the sanctity of human life made in God's image against those who would reduce persons for whom Christ died to an undifferentiated "population" whose very existence is held to constitute a problem. Ironically some environmentalists, while working to protect endangered species and their habitats, seem willing to tolerate the abortion licence.

'Tragedy of the commons'

If the Declaration stopped here, I could probably sign it. But it doesn't, and this is where it runs into difficulties. The drafters aspire to a world where "liberty as a condition of moral action is preferred over government-inspired management of the environment" and where "the relationships between stewardship and private property are fully appreciated." Yet one needn't put one's faith in a Soviet-style command economy to understand the limits of private property. Certainly people will care for their *own* property, because it is in their interests to do so. But it is precisely because of the phenomenon known as the "tragedy of the commons" that some means of exercising common stewardship must be recognized. Aristotle described this phenomenon as follows: what is common to everyone tends to have the least care bestowed upon it.

Air, water and even much of the soil belongs to no one in particular. Thus no one person or community is obviously responsible for it. As part of its mandate to do justice, government is called upon to protect that which is common, including public safety, secure borders, and clean air, water and soil. A proper recognition of different kinds of ownership, including what is often labelled private property, need not exclude a proper role for government in assuming special responsibility for the commons. This includes enacting regulations to protect the environment.

David T. Koyzis teaches political science at Redeemer College, Ancaster, Ontario, which is not too far from the smokestacks of Canada's "Steel City."

Editorial

Globalization: an implacable, merciless god

Harry der Nederlanden

When I was growing up outside Edmonton, Sunday, especially in the summer, used to be a day for taking long walks with the family and perhaps a couple of friends. As kids we rambled a lot, and the area where I grew up was wonderful rambling country: little-used dirt roads lined with trees and bush, open unfenced fields broken by sections of forest, gullies and valleys with little creeks, farms here and there, some abandoned and dilapidated, and the deep, winding gorge carved by the North Saskatchewan River.

The challenge, never far from our minds as kids, was to seduce our parents down some winding path to some field too far – "Just a little farther, just over the next rise!" – so that we couldn't make it back in time for the second service at 3:30. We succeeded a couple of times, but only a couple of times. This, despite the fact that we had no car and the church lay in the opposite direction from our walks. (We unanimously and vociferously turned down any walks that led us closer to church.)

Customs and limits

Going to church twice was something that was never a matter for discussion in our home. My parents knew it was no more than a human custom, but they treated it as divinely ordained. They also admitted that most of our rules about Sunday observance were little more than custom, and they were more lenient than most, but there were definite limits.

Such a traditional way of living, which accepted certain rules and boundaries almost as unquestioningly as the laws of nature, was the norm not long ago. It is still so in many countries, especially away from the cities.

Everywhere those stable, long-lived ways are dissolving. And they are dissolving at an accelerating rate. The prime catalyst in this change? Globalization. Information technology.

Living without those traditions makes life more difficult. More stressful. More demanding. Instead of having many , as it were, ready-to-wear choices that enable us to act out of and in a space of shared understandings, now everything is up for grabs and becomes a matter of having to choose.

Arbitrary selection of lifestyle

There's an added dimension. Or, rather, a loss of dimension. Every choice seems to become of equal importance – a choice merely of personal preference. Whether it is choosing your church affiliation or favorite hockey team, your sexual preference (there are now a half-dozen to choose from) or clothing style, your political viewpoint or latest hobby – all tend to become, more or less, a matter of arbitrarily selecting a certain mode of self-expression, adopting an accessory to set off your unique personality.

This process is by no means new. It has long been seen as part of that huge grab-bag of processes called modernization, disenchantment, secularization or detraditionalization. Wherever the market and mass consumption have come to dominate, old ways, age-old traditions and beliefs begin to dissolve. Compared to the stable order of earlier times, modernity looks like a slide toward anarchy and chaos.

The new information technology has speeded this process tremendously and is spreading its dissolving effects to the farthest reaches of the globe.

Exotic dishes in global restaurant

Ways that were once seen as ordained by God, written into the very rhythms of life and nature itself are uprooted, tossed into the huge cauldron of the market, and ladled out as exotic dishes in the global restaurant.

Several writers have pointed out, however, that Christianity, especially the Reformed variety, is partly to blame for this process. We challenged the traditional view of the cosmic order as a vast hierarchy or chain of being that includes church and state, clergy and magistrates, within one total, sacred order. Instead, the Reformers sought to root these things in faith, which involves an obedient response of the heart or will. What mattered most was not the institutional and traditional linkages, they said, but the direct obedience of Christians to the Word of God. This effected a sea-change.

It created a much more open, experimental attitude toward the world, an attitude that influenced how people approached science, commerce, ecclesiastical and political structures and so on.

A good case can be made for the idea that change and instability entered history through our insistence that God sees not just some but all his children as his co-workers, called to discover and share the wonders and delights of this creation with their Creator. Our work and our freedom does not compete with God's sovereignty, the Reformers taught us. All God's children are prophets, priests and kings.

This was extremely liberating. And risky. God's Word, after all, doesn't contain a lot of specific guidance. To interpret its meaning for the sixteenth century or for the nineteenth century or for the twenty-first century demands not just obedience but tremendous creativity – and trust. To be truly creative, God's creatures need to be able to trust in his sovereignty: that he has made a world that is, in the final analysis, not hostile but our proper home.

Many traditions need to be questioned

There are elements in the process of globalization that are destructive only in the sense that they undermine traditions and structures that are *not* part of any natural order and that were *not* good for some people. There are many human traditions that need to be questioned , melted down and recast in new molds.

When globalization becomes a god, however, it becomes implacable, merciless. This god allows no real creativity, for true creativity is rooted in sabbath, in our capacity to discover a resting place where we can join with God and his people to say, "It is good!"

The god of globalization is a relentless leveller who robs us of our creativity and responsibility. He demands a blind, unquestioning trust, much more so than the covenant God of Scripture, who allows himself to be called to account. And he imposes a harsh discipline. In his book on globalization, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*, Thomas Friedman, who is by and large positive, nevertheless refers to it as "the golden straitjacket." Politicians of every stripe have eagerly adopted its "golden rules" lest the god withdraw his favor from their people, and they become a no-people consigned to what Benjamin Barber ominously calls "the terminal world (*Jihad vs McWorld*)."

One might see Premier Harris's tax cut (see Gerald Vandezande's letter, p. 5) as an offering to this voracious god. Vern Gleddie's column gives us an inkling of what happens to an entire segment of our people – farmers — when we entrust our future to his providence. Calvin Seerveld's remarks on Pentecost and language (see p. 5) are also apropos: the new technology reduces all languages and all cultures to electronic bits of data. This is not the rich unity of Pentecost but the impoverishing unity of Babel, which reduces all differences to consumer products.

Both Walsh and Adams refer to the Enlightenment idea of progress and its hope for continual betterment (see pp. 12, 13). I wonder. The world's store of hope, it seems to me, is sorely depleted. People seem to regard globalization more like the last train passing through the station. It's not even stopping to pick up passengers, so you have to make a desperate leap to get on. The worst thing, however, is being left behind, for there are no other trains. And moving – here's the remnant of Enlightenment faith – is always better than waiting. Whatever hope remains is a desperate hope, for many of those leaping aboard suspect that the engineer is asleep at the switch, and the train may well be a runaway headed for disaster.

We know, however, that history is not a blind process. It becomes so only when we stop believing, stop praying, stop acting as co-workers with God who gives us responsibility for showing love to our neighbors and love for creation. Because it is love that is the economy, the household order, of the Trinity.

"Those who hope in [wait upon] the Lord will renew their strength," says Isaiah.

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Reader questions Hielema's vision of the new earth

This letter addresses itself to CC columnist Bert Hielema.

You have often asked for feedback on your comments and said that you get very little. Well, here is mine.

You are well read and have an eclectic taste in subjects. That is important. You have a good memory for details and an upbeat style. I like that.

However, I question your view of the new earth. Personally I think that since we will know all things, there will be no more schools and no more research. That is a good piece of our current economy gone. There will be no sickness and no death. That eliminates all health care workers, nurses, doctors, and others who work in that field. No sin means no law enforcement, no courts, no lawyers, no jails, no army and weapon development, no social workers. (there goes my job) and no entertainment industry to distract us from worshipping God.

Recycling as prep for eternal life?

That takes care of pretty much everything else that drives our economy except food production and home building. No marriage will change our need for housing in a radical way, and "there will be no night there" means no bedrooms? It certainly makes it hard to know what we'll be doing there other than praising God.

I was a little puzzled by your practising for the life to come by printing your next e-mail message on the back of the previous one as if that is important. Why would you think such actions help you practice for a better life in the world to come? The fact that I too have a set of habits "to do my bit for ecology" is not important here. What is important is that your focus on responsible husbandry to practice for the world to come may actually distract from our calling here and now to proclaim the good news of Jesus' death and resurrection and his coming again!

Remember, Bert, Jesus did not come to give you a few ergonomically sound hints to help you live for him. You AND your lifestyle are redeemed by his death. Not your compost. Please proclaim his death "for the remission of all our sins" in your writing and do that till he comes again. There is so little time and there are so many who need to hear the word of salvation.

Jack Van Meggelen
Toronto, Ont.

NEEDED: Conscientious objectors to Ontario's war against the poor

We strongly object to the Harris government's latest action to further burden Ontario's most vulnerable people. The government is once again denying them fiscal fairness and social justice and excluding them from the tax cuts and the budget surplus announced by Ontario Finance Minister Ernie Eves.

Once again, the Ontario government discriminates against the poorest of the poor, those who are trying to survive on inadequate social assistance, and favours upper-income residents with substantial tax cuts as well as a special "dividend" of up to $200 per taxpayer. This amounts to over $1-billion — a sum that could go a long way to provide affordable housing for our homeless neighbours or improved social assistance rates, which have fallen by 27 per cent (including inflation) since the Harris Government took power in 1995.

Systematically abandoning the poor

The government's further withdrawal from its particular responsibility for the poor widens the gap between the rich and the poor and further burdens the voluntary sector, such as the food banks and the hostels. What we have here is clearly an ongoing project of systematically abandoning the poor.

These tax give-aways are accompanied by more cuts to social-support services, services essential to the building and maintaining of effective programs such as affordable housing and quality child care that help make for strong families and healthy communities. Can we with a clear conscience condone this war against the poor? Can conscientious citizens in good faith accept tax cuts while we have massive child and family poverty, homelessness, chronic unemployment, and a huge debt? Should we launch a non-partisan, public protest movement of conscientious objectors to the ongoing cuts in basic social programs that will finance the inequitable tax cuts?

The Common Sense Revolution's survival-of-the-fittest ideology does not make any economic, political and social sense at all. This brutal war against the poor violates our conscience, our faith. It betrays the fundamental principles of love for neighbor, economic equity, fiscal fairness, and social justice for all. It undermines our Canadian way of life — together building a stewardly and sustainable economy, a caring and sharing society, an alternative way of life that respects human dignity and practices mutual responsibility.

Ontario's poor and unemployed are entitled to our communal respect and social solidarity. We may not abandon these vulnerable neighbors! We are deeply concerned that the Ontario government continues to download its public-justice responsibility for the poor to the faith-communities and other members of the voluntary sector.

We urgently need more strategic planning and concerted action among the faith-communities, the food banks, the housing co-ops, child care advocates, and other socially concerned partners. We must work vigorously for the common good! Together! The ongoing political discrimination against the poor is inexcusable. The practices of economic exclusion and social segregation are unacceptable. They must stop!

For starters, we plan to donate our "rebate" to advocacy and public education organizations such as Campaign 2000, the Citizens for Public Justice's "Let's Invest in Canada's Children" fund and the Campaign Against Child Poverty to help build a more meaningful life for Ontario's forgotten people. For us, it's a matter of faith, of conscience! What are you thinking and doing?

For information contact: Mr. Gerald Vandezande, Former Public Affairs Director Citizens for Public Justice Tel: 416-293-8912 Fax: 416-293-1852 E-mail: **jlsec@ionsys.com**

Babel and Pentecost

Apparently God still enjoys the creatural diversity of speaking! Early in history, when the Babylon humans wanted to use a single language to make a Name for themselves, God stopped their vanity with the miracle of different ways of speaking, bewildering them with unintelligibility. Later in history, when the diverse speaking peoples of the world attended the inauguration of the Holy Spirit on earth, you might say, God surprised everybody, bewildered them again by having them hear clearly and understand people of a certain Galilean locality who were filled with the Holy Spirit, speaking in these different., strange languages and dialects about *magnalia Dei*, the Great Deeds of the Lord. Different ways of speaking at Babel in the plains of Shinar was the Lord's gentle, backhanded way of hindering great evil and giving humankind a fresh start. Different ways of speaking at Pentecost in Jerusalem was the Lord's redemptive way of happily blessing cultural differences in their diversity united by praise of the Lord's acts of salvation.

Maybe Pentecost was a kind of foretaste of what conversation will be like on the new earth: you effortlessly speak the other person's language intelligibly. That special gift of the Holy Spirit to those Galilean believers at Pentecost, according to the Bible (Acts 2:4), also happened when the apostle Peter, as an elect Jew, finally caught on to God's message that an Italian soldier and uncircumcised Gentiles can be at home in the community of Christ's followers too. (Acts 10:1 - 11:18).

So the biblical point of the same person's being gifted to magnify the Lord in different local languages is that the Lord does not pick favorites in languages, and God's people also are not to consider "unclean" what is not foreign to God (Acts 10:34). God enjoys hearing "Hallelujahs!" sung indiscriminately in Arabic, Yiddish, Swahili, Frisian, Hangul and Fulani speech, just as the Lord is not partial, say the Scriptures, to the rich, to male adults, or classicists, but contrariwise honors especially the poor, selects lowly handmaids for high honor, and inducts those who lack a refined rhetorical training into bringing strangers good news.

Excerpt from an address given by Calvin Seerveld for the North American Christian Foreign Teachers Association in California, April 7, 2000, "Babel, Pentecost, Glossolalia and Philoxenia: No language is foreign to God."

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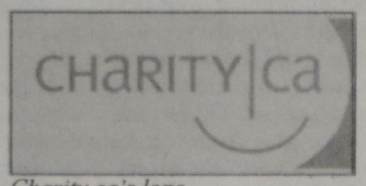
Agency links web-surfing donors to charities

Alan Doerksen

ST. CATHARINES, Ont. — Web-surfing Christians who want to donate to their favourite charity can now do so on-line, with the help of Charity.ca. The Toronto-based agency launched its website **(www.charity.ca)** in April, and allows a donor to locate the charity of his or her choice, make a donation by credit card, and quickly receive an electronic charitable receipt.



Charity.ca's logo.

Canadian businessman Richard Ivey is the chairman and founder of Charity.ca., which is a project of the NRG Factory, which describes itself (on the Charity,ca website) as "an Internet incubator."

Charities that wish to be listed with Charity.ca are not charged for listings. However, the agency invoices charities for eight per cent of any donations made to them. This eight per cent covers Charity.ca's administrative costs, such as salaries, development of the website, marketing and promotion.

To be listed with Charity.ca, charities need to go through a 30-minute registration process, giving detailed information to the agency, such as mission statements, expense and revenue information, event listings, and number of staff and volunteers.

E-tax receipts

Charity.ca works with Artez Inc. to produce "e-tax receipts," which the agency says have the approval of the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency (CCRA). CCRA's position on this states: "Computer generated official donation receipts are acceptable provided these are legible and the integrity of the computer data entries is sufficiently guaranteed.... Protection against unauthorized access is a key security precaution."

'Soft launch' to begin

Charity.ca began with a "soft launch" of its website in April, and is now running a national media relations and P.R. campaign, through late spring and summer. This campaign will include staff visits to several Canadian cities to invite charities to take their message to the Internet.

A number of charities are listed on the website, many of them related to medical agencies (such as AIDS Regina) or hospitals (such as the Burnaby Hospital Foundation). But a search of the categories "Churches" and "Christian" revealed few agencies with an obvious Christian connection.

Charity.ca does not recommend one charity over another. To find a charity, interested donors can search on the website for a charity by name, category, keyword, location, area of operation, or affiliation.

Charity.ca's website also offers stories and opinion pieces related to donating to charities. These include "Top 10 Tips for Giving Wisely," "Concerned About Credit Card Safety Online?" and "Long-term Support vs. Band-Aid Solutions."

Christianity has strong presence on campuses in England

LONDON, Eng. — (Religion Today) Christianity is big on campuses in England, the *Sunday Times of London* says. The Christian Union, a nondenominational, evangelical group, is "the largest society at most of the country's top colleges," the newspaper said.

Christian students "are not the campus squares they once were" and are far more likely "to sport fashionable clothes than tambourines and Jesus sandals," the *Times* said. Members don't believe in getting drunk, taking drugs, or having sex before marriage, and they oppose homosexuality, the publication said.

The moral certainty that Christianity offers "is increasingly attractive to students," said Andrew Henley, a college professor and editor of the journal of the Association of Christian Economists. Postmodern culture tells students they can think whatever they like, but "that is a very insecure answer," he said.

There is a state of perfect peace with God which can be attained under imperfect obedience.
... John Owen

One jubilee after the other

Campus Culture

Peter Schuurman

Your community is as big as your heart. Being in such a diverse community as the university, I think my heart is growing bigger. One very small example: I not only recognize that some Reformed folks are not Dutch, I know some Dutch-Canadians that are not Reformed. In fact, quite a number of them are Roman Catholic.

Leny Holierhoek is one of the Dutch-Canadian Roman Catholics in my world. She shares space with me in Campus Ministries as the Co-ordinator for Justice and Peace Programs, sponsored by the R.C. church. She has been working here for ten years, and this month she retires. This is her story.

Home bombed

Leny was born in 1935 in Yerseke, the Netherlands. She grew up in a time of Nazi occupation and air raids. One day in 1940 they had to evacuate her hometown. Her family left the home, never to return, for her house was razed during the bombing. Everything was destroyed, including her new doll. Life had to start all over from scratch. "All good-byes are a little bit of dying," she remarks.

They started a new home in another town, the war eventually ended, and the country recovered. But in 1953 her parents decided to emigrate and join other family members in Canada. Leny doesn't remember much about the seven day ocean voyage except that she was "sea sick from one end to the other." They began fresh a second time. wrestling with language barriers, poor living conditions and harsh working conditions.

Leny was eighteen and dug her heels into the Canadian soil. She laboured on a farm, a canning factory, worked as a live-in maid, signed up as a Girl Guide leader, and then landed a job at a bank. She even tried the convent life for a time, but it didn't suit her. She ended up married with four children who are now themselves married and scattered across the globe. And once they grew up, Leny decided to get a BA in Political Science from Brock. Another new start, this time at age 42.

Organizational whirlwind

Leny has always been an organizational whirlwind in the community. Her passion for justice and peace has spurred her involvement as founder, president, and member of such organizations as the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace, The Catholic Women's League, the Bruce Trail Association, the Ontario Trails Council, the Niagara Escarpment Commission, the Latin America Support Group, and Ten Days for Global Justice. It has always amazed me how many circles Leny moves through in the course of a week.

Her job at Brock seemed like a natural extension of her pre-existing volunteer work — she promotes awareness on campus through public lectures and other educational events about global poverty, disarmament, and the environmental crisis. I asked her what she thought was the number one issue facing us today and without blinking she said: "Globalization: international corporations are taking over the world. They find a country where they can pay *the least* to produce a product which they sell for *the most* elsewhere. They exploit labour, they exploit resources, and they give no thought to the environment." Without any regulations or rules, this causes the global gap between rich and poor to turn into a canyon. A canyon is a good image, too, because they are often like deserts, bleak and bare.

Motivated by faith

I asked Leny how her faith influenced her work. "Totally," she replied. Everything she does is based solidly on the gospel/biblical/social encyclical tradition. "Anyone who believes in the biblical way and sees what's going on around us must see that there is really something wrong," she maintains. She adds that she has always admired Gerald Vandezande from CPJ in Toronto, a man who "seems to carry a Bible in one hand and a newspaper in the other. Whatever he says is always rooted."

What has impressed me about Leny is how committed she is to her volunteer work, and how broad is the community that she cares about — it's a community as broad as this pale blue dot of a planet. Now that she has retired, I can't see her slowing down very much. There is always another front to be defended, whether its child poverty, the Niagara Escarpment, or Latin America. "To tell you the truth, I never get bored," she laughs. "I don't know what that means. I have more interests than I have time for — or money — for that matter."

Homecoming for all

Leny is starting afresh again now as she leaves Brock. But looking back on her life so far, Leny testifies:

"I look at all the odds and ends of my life and I can truly say, 'The Lord is there.' It's all come together in time, like an amazing revelation. My knowledge, my experience, my contacts — somehow it all seems to fit. Providence is there, and that's all there is to it. I've been very blessed."

From Holland to Canada to the globe. For those of us who walk in small communities, her life of new beginnings and global concern is an inspiration. It is the year of Jubilee or as some have translated it, "homecoming," and Leny continues her life-work of trying to make this world a home for those who need a homecoming. Because she knows what it's like to be far from home.

Peter Schuurman is the Christian Reformed campus chaplain at Brock University in St. Catharines, Ont.

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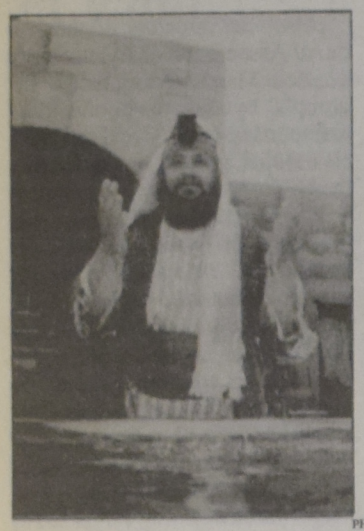
Jesus in the badlands



PHOTOS FROM CANADIAN BADLANDS PASSION PLAY WEBSITE

Two actors and one donkey from the annual Canadian Badlands Passion Play in Drumheller, Alberta.

Gordon Legge

DRUMHELLER, Alta. — It seems like a sensible idea – to use the annual Canadian Badlands Passion Play in Drumheller as an evangelism tool to bring Jesus Christ to thousands of Calgarians.

Organizers of the increasingly popular outdoor portrayal of the life of Jesus of Nazareth are finding, however, that few churches are using it.

"We haven't been able to trigger off that imaginative zeal," says founder La Verne Erickson. "But I feel that people who listen to the Passion Play enjoy it more than listening to a sermon."

Evangelism opportunity

Passion play founder La Verne Erickson believes Calgary churches are in an excellent position to take advantage of the play held at the beginning of every summer in Drumheller.

With thousands of counselors trained last fall for Franklin Graham's Calgary Festival '99, it's an easy step to have them bring family, friends and neighbors to Drumheller to introduce them to Christ, he says.

Jack Neufeld, chairman of Calgary Festival '99, who has seen the Drumheller production, says that a few of Calgary's larger evangelical churches need to take hold of the idea. Then others will follow.

Certainly others are taking note of the historic drama's increasing popularity:

- CBC Television was to broadcast a half-hour documentary, *The Miracle of the Badlands*, produced by Calgary filmmaker Bill Locke on May 22. It will be televised at Eastertime for the next three years.
- The Canadian Badlands Performing Arts Summer School expects student enrolment to fill the school to capacity this year, only its third year of operation. Plans call for an expansion of the school from three to six weeks next year.
- Last year, Attractions Canada named the play Alberta's top cultural attraction.

"What I feel is missing is having the church behind it and having the recognized support of the church leaders," says Erickson, who hopes to expand the play's run and build a Jerusalem Wall/ Jesus Centre complex at the badlands site which will attract new visitors throughout the summer.

Leadership misses vision

"Lay people see it (the vision)," he says. Erickson approached the Calgary Evangelical Ministerial Association a few years ago and tried to set up an arrangement with some Calgary churches last year but was pre-empted by the Graham festival. "It's the church leadership where things are missing."

Every summer since the play began in 1994, people have come forward afterwards to tell how their lives have been changed. "I believe thousands can be reached for Christ," he says.

It's a simple plan. Calgary churches would look around their communities and decide whom they want to bring. Then they'd train people to bring them to the play and then take them back to their churches to disciple.

To help the process along, the Passion Play society has established evangelism workshops to train people to bring their family and friends.

Daniel Dannhauer, pastor at Elim Pentecostal Tabernacle in Rosebud, is chairman of the play's outreach and evangelism committee.

For the past couple of years, they've had a team of people from Drumheller churches trained to counsel new Christians after each performance.

This year, he's also offering complimentary passes to pastors from across southern Alberta to attend the play in July as their guest, giving them an opportunity to see how the play can be used as a tool for Christian evangelism.

"We're trying to get as many churches as possible to participate," he says. "We want to encourage them to come and talk with us about the Passion Play and how they can use it as an evangelism tool or as part of their evangelism outreach."

Permanent tourist site

Erickson is pressing ahead with his vision for a permanent tourist destination at the site. About $40,000 has been raised to develop a concept that would take visitors back to the time of Christ, depicting the life and times of Christ, where young people would work as shepherds, carpenters and wine makers.

Organizers are examining the feasibility of constructing a combined Drumheller convention centre and Jerusalem Wall/Jesus Centre complex that would contain an auditorium, change room areas and space for volunteers.

"I want to peel back the layers of history and get back to the roots," says Erickson, founder and director of the Rosebud Dinner Theatre and the Rosebud School of the Arts.

"This is a grand opportunity for all of us to practise the rudiments of our faith. It would be so freeing for Christians of all backgrounds to get together and focus on what we really believe and love."

CANADIAN BADLANDS PASSION PLAY – Afternoon performances in Drumheller July 1-3 and July 8-9 at 2 p.m. and evening performances on June 30 and July 7 at 6:30 p.m. For information and reservations, 403-823-7750.

EVANGELISM and OUTREACH – Pastors and evangelism directors from across southern Alberta are invited to attend the Canadian Badlands Passion Play this year as guests of the Passion Play society to learn about how it can be used as an evangelism tool to bring people to Christ. For information, contact Daniel Dannhauer, pastor of Elim Pentecostal Tabernacle in Rosebud, at 403-823-3207 or fax, 403-823-6144 or e-mail: **dandann@ telusplanet.net**

The site of the passion play, with the Alberta Badlands as a backdrop.

Summer school in 'a sacred place'

Gordon Legge

Calgary high school student Anna Van Hooft has been to summer camp and she's been to the Canadian Badlands Performing Arts Summer School.

Let her tell you, summer school is better.

"It's awesome," says Van Hooft, 14, who will be attending the school for the third year this summer.

"It's what me and my friends consider a sacred place."

The Drumheller school, established in 1998 to offer accredited performing arts education to high school students in a Christian setting, is drawing rave reviews.

"It caught us by surprise," says La Verne Erickson, school director and director of the Rosebud School of the Arts. "I don't think we anticipated what a successful program we'd have with the summer school."

One example of its success is the fact that when a student attended the school from Shaunavon, Sask., he returned home so enthusiastic about his experience that the community's Dark Horse Theatre set up a scholarship to send a student there annually.

Feather in their cap

"That's a little feather in our cap," says Erickson.

With the famous Drumheller Badlands as a backdrop, the school runs for three weeks this summer July 2–22 at Drumheller Composite High School.

In its first year, 46 students from 30 communities across Alberta attended the school. Last year, there were 70 students from across the country. This year they expect to reach a capacity of about 100 students.

Erickson says that since no other summer camps or schools focus on the performing arts, the Badlands school fills a niche. It gives like-minded students a place to work on their skills within a Christian setting.

Students are evangelized through their participation in the Passion Play, a dramatic outdoor re-enactment of the life of Jesus Christ. There's also a daily Bible study. It's optional but almost all students attend.

"It had a really Christian atmosphere," said Van Hooft. "You didn't feel threatened to be Christian."

While most camps are geared to younger children in Grades 6, 7 and 8, Erickson says this program is intergenerational with adult instructors and counselors serving as mentors for the teenagers.

As well, veteran performers in variety of specialties, from magic and illusion to Shakespearean drama to Jewish folk dance provide expert instruction.

Church

National Council of Churches plans group for evangelicals, Catholics

WASHINGTON, D.C. (EP) — The National Council of Churches (NCC) decided May 18 to form a new organization that will include all major branches of U.S. Christianity, including evangelicals and Catholics.

The new ecumenical body could replace the current group, which represents mainline Protestant, black Protestant and Orthodox denominations. Most Christians in the U.S. Are not represented by the NCC, and are instead members of Roman Catholic, Evangelical or Pentecostal churches.

Preliminary talks

The 50-member board's plan calls for a task force to be formed to hold preliminary talks with Catholic, Evangelical and Pentecostal leaders. The task force will propose a next step at the council's national assembly in November.

The Rev. Robert Edgar, chief executive of the council, has already made preliminary inquiries with the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and the National Association of Evangelicals. He hopes to meet soon with the Southern Baptist Convention, the largest Protestant denomination in the U.S.

"I find this extremely helpful and hopeful," said the Rev. Clifton Kirkpatrick, chief executive of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

The idea faces several challenges. Conservative Protestants have generally opposed the political and theological positions taken by the NCC. The U.S. Catholic Church decided against joining the NCC, in part because by itself it was larger than the combined 35 denominations in the council. The NCC's motivation in forming a larger group may also be questioned, since the move comes at a time when the group faces waning influence and financial crisis, including a $4 million deficit for 1999.

However, since Vatican II Catholic bishops have been free to join ecumenical groups, and have done so in other countries.

Also, the directors of the National Association of Evangelicals decided March 6 to change the group's bylaws to permit dual membership in NAE and other ecclesiastical groups, most notably the NCC.

Bishop Kevin W. Mannoia, President of NAE, said, "This amendment represents a major statement about the strength of our identity and future. Our predecessors have done a remarkable job in defining our theological unity as evangelicals. Whereas we have often been defined relative to the more theologically liberal NCC, we recognize that our identity is no longer based on being compared to them."

Misreading the valiant woman

Chapter & Verse
Al Wolters

"She is like the ships of the merchant, she brings her food from far away." (Prov 31:14, NRSV)

"She opens her mouth with wisdom." (Prov 31:26, NRSV)

I have recently had occasion to study a number of commentaries on Proverbs from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This was part of a project in which I seek to trace the post-Reformation history of interpretation of the last 22 verses of the book of Proverbs, the so-called Song of the Valiant Woman.

In the process I came across some striking examples of how biblical interpretation is affected by one's presuppositions. A case in point is the way early modern exegetes explained verse 14, in which the Valiant Woman is compared to a merchant ship. This verse would seem to imply that she ventured far from home in search of provisions for her household, but such a reading conflicts with the traditional view that the place of the woman is in the home.

Accordingly, we find the following explanation of this verse in *La perfecta casada* (1583), a famous Spanish exposition of Prov 31:10-31 by the Spanish biblical scholar and poet Luis de León: "Just as the ship travels through various lands looking for profitable goods, so she [the woman] must make the rounds of all the corners of her house, retrieve from them everything which may seem worthless, and convert it into something useful and advantageous." Instead of traveling to faraway places, it turns out that the woman ventures no farther afield than her basement or attic!

It would seem that a preconception about the proper place of women in society prevents Luis de León from hearing what the biblical text is saying here.

Speaking hardly at all

An even more striking example is found in his treatment of the simple statement, in verse 26, "She opens her mouth with wisdom." Presumably this means that the Valiant Woman speaks, and when she does, she does so with wisdom.

However, the ideal of many Christian writers in early modern times was that women did not speak, but were silent. Consequently, we find the following comment on this verse by Luis de León: "And to open her mouth with wisdom, as the sage says here, means not to open it except when necessity requires it, which is the same thing as to speak with moderation, and on few occasions, because the occasions are few where necessity requires it." This seems to turn the text into almost the opposite of its plain sense.

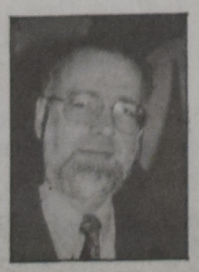
Strange as it may seem, the little booklet from which these examples are taken, a booklet which was first published in the sixteenth century, is not just an obscure scholarly treatise, but is something of a popular classic in Spanish literature. It has sold hundreds of thousands of copies over the centuries, and continues to be in print, in many editions, to this day. Its title, *La perfecta casada*, means "The Perfect Wife," and was traditionally part of the wedding gifts which every Spanish bride would receive.

Ideology and Biblical interpretation

From the vantage point of a different social and cultural situation, it is easy to spot the way the older traditional view of normative gender roles has distorted the reading of the biblical text in passages like these. Feminist biblical scholars have done a good job of exposing many of these misinterpretations in other cultural milieus.

But it is at least equally important to learn from these examples how we too may be reading the Bible in ways which conform to the social and cultural preconceptions which we have in our own milieu.

It is also a sobering thought that Luis de León, in his day, was quite progressive in matters of biblical interpretation. It was an act of considerable courage on his part to give a *literal* exposition of the Song of the Valiant Woman, which had traditionally been interpreted as an allegory of the Church. In fact, he had, not long before, spent five years in jail (courtesy of the Spanish Inquisition), for doing something similar with the *Song of Songs*. Biblical expertise and moral courage are no guarantee that our interpretation of Scripture will not be overwhelmed by the ideologies of our culture.



Al Wolters teaches Bible and Greek at Redeemer College, Ancaster, Ontario. He is currently preparing for publication a volume of his collected writings on the Song of the Valiant Woman.

Fifty thousand Christians march through Brandenburg Gate

BERLIN, Germany — (Religion Today) Fifty thousand Christians walked through the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin May 20, praying and praising God. Their colorful procession was part of "Jesus Day," said *idea*, the German evangelical news agency. Tourists and Berliners "marveled at the happy, praying crowd," the publication said.

Marchers surrounded the center of Berlin in two columns. They stopped to pray at sites such as the Parliament building, the Reichstag, Charitéé hospital, theaters, commercial centers, churches, a synagogue, and the site of the future holocaust memorial. The two columns rejoined in front of the "red town hall" in what used to be East Berlin, and despite heavy rain many knelt to worship, praise God, confess sins, and rededicate their lives. The day ended with a large party in honor of the 2,000th birthday of Jesus Christ, and all Berliners were invited to enjoy the modern Christian music.

Jesus Day was organized for the first time by a coalition of charismatics, Pentecostals, Baptists, Methodists, Pietists, Lutherans, and Catholics, *idea* said. Traditional evangelicals in Germany so far have kept their distance from the Pentecostal and charismatic movements, the publication said. The Protestant bishop of Berlin, Wolfgang Huber, joined in.

The march took place three weeks before the international March for Jesus, June 10, so as not to conflict with traditional evangelical youth meetings at Pentecost. Fifteen million Christians around the world are expected to take part in the marches for Jesus, said Gerald Coates, one of the initiators of the march.

German Lutherans want simultaneous international church meetings

GENEVA (ENI) — Co-operation between two of the world's main Protestant church organisations could be considerably increased, if a proposal by Germany's Lutheran churches is accepted. The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) — the world's main Lutheran church organisation — has been invited to hold its next assembly in Germany in 2003. The LWF's German National Committee said last week that it hoped that the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, the world's main Reformed church organisation, would hold its assembly in Germany at the same time as the LWF gathering.

However an LWF official appeared to rule out the possibility of simultaneous assemblies in the near future.

Church

Southern Baptists discourage ordination of women

ORLANDO, Fla. — (Religion Today) Southern Baptists are tightening their boundaries on biblical interpretation. In addition to discouraging the ordination of women, a revised statement of faith by the Southern Baptist Convention emphasizes that people must profess faith in Christ to gain salvation. It also rejects charismatic teachings and opposes abortion, homosexuality, and mercy killing.

Changes to the statement of faith, called the Baptist Faith and Message, were made public last week by a drafting committee and will be considered when the SBC meets June 13-14 in Orlando, Fla. The statement, which reflects a continued rightward turn in the nation's largest Protestant denomination, is not binding on local congregations, which are self-governing, but is influential and is used as a guide in hiring denominational employees.

The SBC also plans to soften requirements for keeping the Sabbath. A previous faith statement called for Baptists to avoid "worldly amusements" and secular work, but the revision suggests that Baptists spend Sundays doing things "commensurate with the Christian's conscience."

Baptists "are a people of the Book, who recognize no other authority for faith and practice but God's Word," said Adrian Rogers, who led the committee. "We are unembarrassed to take our stand upon the solid rock of biblical authority." The Bible "is the source of our authority, not merely a support for our historic doctrines," he said.

The approximately 1,600 Southern Baptist clergywomen would be allowed to continue to serve, but the Southern Baptist Convention would oppose future ordinations, The Associated Press reported.

United Methodists adopt more conservative positions

CLEVELAND, Ohio (Religion Today) — Methodists adopted more conservative positions on some social, political, and theological issues. The governing body of the United Methodist Church, which met in Cleveland in May, was in the news primarily for affirming traditional sexual morality.

But the UMC also voted decisively to oppose partial-birth abortion and to support voluntary prayer in public schools and "at other public occasions." Methodist social agencies have opposed restrictions on abortions.

The denomination also changed its position on justifiable war, saying that "most Christians" believe war should be waged to stop "unchecked aggression, tyranny, and genocide." The church's Social Principles had condemned war, and its agencies have opposed almost all U.S. military actions.

The General Conference also became more conservative theologically. It approved an addition to the church's Discipline, declaring that Jesus Christ is the "Son of God, the Savior of the world, and the Lord of all."

The meeting marked a "potentially major shift in direction" for the UMC, said Mark Tooley of the conservative Washington, D.C., group Institute for Religion and Democracy. "The silent majority of the church, which is moderate to conservative, is beginning to be heard."

Thirty percent of the delegates voted to eliminate altogether the Board of Church and Society, the denomination's "very controversial and very liberal" policy lobby office, he said.

Presbyterian church allows same-sex unions, but not marriages

BALTIMORE, Maryland (Religion Today) — Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) ministers may perform same-sex union services as long as they are not confused with marriage ceremonies. That was the ruling by the Judicial Commission, the denomination's highest court, which met in Baltimore May 19-22, PCUSA News said. The court also ruled that a gay man who has said he does not intend to remain celibate may become a candidate for ordination, but will not necessarily be accepted.

The rulings uphold current church law, which limits the sexual behavior of church officers, denominational leaders said. Commonly known as "Amendment B," it requires that ordained church officers practice fidelity in marriage between a man and a woman, or chastity in singleness.

Two standards

The rulings mean that "those to be ordained or installed to church office are to practice 'fidelity in marriage and chastity in singleness.' At the same time, it made clear this standard does not apply to membership in the church (which is open to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior) or to the various steps that might lead up to the call to ordained office," said Clifton Kirkpatrick, leader of the denomination.

The PC (U.S.A.) "does not support 'gay marriage' or the blessing of any relationship between two persons of the same gender that could be considered to be a marriage," he said.

A third case was deferred until July. It dealt with a congregation in Burlington, Vt., that ordains gays and lesbians as church officers despite a constitutional provision that forbids doing so.

Presbyterian Church (USA) declining fast

(Religion Today) The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) thought it had plugged a leak, but that isn't the case. The church has been losing about 30,000 members a year since the mid-1960s before that trend slowed to 20,000 in 1997 and 1998. But membership loss speeded up again last year to 27,473. Adult professions of faith, adult and child baptisms, and transfers from other denominations all showed declines.

Members keep slipping out "the back door," an official said. Figures show that 106,419 people dropped out of the 2.56 million-member PCUSA in 1999. That shows that "our discipleship and nurture of members is not as it should be," denominational leader Clifton Kirkpatrick said.

A bright spot is the growth of men's groups. There are 6,000 in PCUSA churches that hold prayer breakfasts, teach church-school classes, work on Habitat for Humanity crews, support soup kitchens or shelters, mentor young men, and help in disaster relief.

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Assisted Reproductive Technologies: *in search of a Christian response*

Alice Joosse

"In bitterness of soul Hannah wept much and prayed to the Lord. And she made a vow, saying, "O Lord Almighty, if you will only look upon your servant's misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the Lord for all the days of his life."
1 Sam. 1: 10-11

Infertility is a painful reality for seven to 15 per cent of North American couples. In the last 30 years, significant technological advances have been made in the medical treatment of infertility, giving many of these couples new hope in their desire to bear children.

Fertility drugs, *in vitro* fertilization and artificial insemination are only some of the assisted reproductive technologies now readily available to those who suffer the anguish of infertility.

How should Christians respond?

How should Christians respond to the availability of these technologies? Are they, like other medical breakthroughs, a gift from God, or are persons who make use of assisted reproductive technologies "playing god"? While the new forms of intervention in the reproductive process have created hope for many, some Christians feel a deep sense of unease in considering them.

The Committee for Contact with the Government (CCG), a standing social justice advocacy committee of the Christian Reformed Church's Canadian Ministries Board is currently exploring the implications for public policy of the complex issues surrounding the use and regulation of assisted reproductive technologies.

In time, CCG hopes to bring to the attention of our elected representatives in Parliament a biblically informed perspective on this issue. Since we know that federal health minister Allan Rock is about to introduce new legislation to establish ethical guidelines on the use of new reproductive technologies, a broad discussion of this matter is timely.

In its preliminary exploration of the ethical use of assisted reproductive technologies, the CCG felt it would be important to hear from Christian individuals and couples who have struggled with infertility. In particular, the committee is interested in learning how individuals and couples address matters of faith as they struggle with the options that are now available to them.

The CCG believes that we can learn much from those sisters and brothers who are closest to this issue, people who have agonized on a personal level over the propriety of using assisted reproductive technology to bring about the birth of a precious child of their own.

While the primary intent of the CCG is to address government on issues of justice, a secondary aim is to provide pastoral support and advice to churches and individuals who feel burdened by the problem of infertility. It is the hope and prayer of the committee that its findings will assist not only government, but also the church, particularly in its pastoral work and, perhaps, in its own local advocacy initiatives.

In an attempt to understand better the struggles of sisters and brothers who experience infertility, the CCG is inviting individuals and couples to share their stories with us. Couples or individuals willing to help are asked to respond to the questions below. Please respond either in writing via mail, fax or e-mail, or by telephone:

1. Please share with us the story of your personal struggle with infertility.
2. Have you considered and/or used assisted reproductive technologies to address infertility?
3. How have you experienced these assisted reproductive technologies?
4. How did your faith contribute to your decision making? What struggles and fears have you experienced? What joys?
5. How have you experienced the support and sharing of your church in this journey?
6. How can the church support its members better who struggle with infertility?
7. Please share anything else that you think is important to this discussion.
8. Please indicate whether or not you wish to keep your identity and/or story confidential.

Alice Joosse, a chartered psychologist and member of the CCG, will be pleased to speak with you or receive your written comments and observations.

In recognition of the highly personal and sensitive nature of this discussion, all submissions will be kept confidential if so desired, and requests for anonymity will be honoured. Please forward your responses to:

Alice Joosse, 10510 - 134 Street
Edmonton, Alberta, T5N 2B5
Phone: 780-451-0295
E-mail:
AJoosse@epsb.edmonton. ab.ca

The committee would like to thank in advance those who courageously share their deeply personal stories. Please try to submit your responses not later than June 30, 2000.

Your funds will be invested in Christian Reformed Church and Christian school building projects in Canada.

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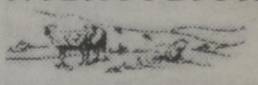
Food prices will soar if farmers not saved

COUNTRY COUNTERCULTURE



VERN M. GLEDDIE

"The public feels little farm connection," proclaimed the lead editorial in the Feb. 24 issue of *The Western Producer*. The editors quoted a recent Angus Reid poll showing only five per cent of Canadians feel agriculture should receive top priority from Canada's leaders.

The editorial concluded that Canadians can be so complacent about helping farmers during these difficult times because it is farmers who are hurting, not consumers. Canadian Federation of Agriculture statistics were quoted showing only 9.8 per cent of disposable income is spent on food and of that a mere 6 per cent (0.6 per cent of disposable income) goes to farmers. In the extreme, for manufactured foods with a high degree of processing and packaging, farmers receive sometimes no more than the packager does.

I find it frustrating selling a lamb when I see a processor charging $45 for 90 minutes of work. whereas I receive $110 for feeding and caring for the animal for 8 or 9 months as well as for its mother the year round.

Farmer's share of dollar has shrunk

The situation is worsening. *The Western Producer*, May 18, quoting the Centre for Rural Studies at St. Peter's College in Muenster, Sask.. reported that the farmer's share of the food dollar has shrunk in the last 25 years, while retail food prices have soared. Specifically, between 1975 and 1997, whereas the cost of a box of corn flakes rose by $2.44, the price of corn in that box increased by only three cents. For beef the gap between farm and retail prices grew by $4.50 per kilo.

According to the farm press, federal statistics show that since 1974, farm gross income increased from $9 billion to $29 billion, yet net farm income declined slightly. Obviously the middle men between farmers and consumers used their power to capture the difference. Although hog prices, for example, collapsed in 1998-99, packer profits increased. Another example: while the farmgate price of wheat has remained stagnant for 25 years. the retail price of bread manufactured from wheat has tripled.

Some are calling on farmers to exert more power in the marketplace, to unite and demand higher prices.

Others suggest that farmers simply be granted. for example, an extra cent per loaf of bread, because that would bring enormous benefit to the producers of grain, yet be barely noticeable as an increase in the price of bread.

It isn't likely that farmers will make a show of power, though there is someone travelling in United States and Canada signing up farmers to stop growing crops for awhile.

Too fragmented to unite

Farmers are too few in number and too fragmented to be able to mount a united campaign. Too many of them, between keeping their farms going and holding down another job, don't have the luxury or energy or resources to stop production. Many are merely giving up, selling out and leaving the farm.

Canada's governments also don't demonstrate a grasp of the problem nor much willingness to investigate, let alone take action. "I don't understand agriculture," Premier Klein of Alberta said recently. And politicians can get away without taking much action because Canadians don't feel agriculture is important.

Ignorance will not be bliss, however, when groceries cost twice what they do now as is the case in some other Western countries.

There is already serious deterioration in farmer's ability to supply the cheap food governments and consumers demand. As farmers grasp at straws in order to stay in farming, they are depending more and more on companies that supply inputs and buy their products. Farms grow larger as farmers try to take advantage of a mythical and elusive efficiency of scale. Eventually only the farm servicing and food manufacturing companies will be able to afford to hold land. And then the true costs of farming plus a sizeable profit margin will be built into the cost of food.

Black humor about agricultural economics has long been circulating in the farm community. Perhaps joking is the way to cope for some people who desperately want to continue to farm. What did the farmer do with the $1 million he won in the lottery? He kept farming until it was all gone.

The situation certainly is not funny. If the citizens of Canada and their elected leaders wait much longer to preserve Canada's family-farm oriented agriculture, it will be too late.

Vern Glessie has a sheep ranch near Edmonton, Alta.

Sports

Bobby's demons

After the Buzzer

I have a long fuse. Very long. I can put up with just about any kind of frustration for a long time. But there was the crockpot incident. As you may know, a crockpot is a porcelain bowl that sits inside a metallic cylinder. You use it to slow-cook food. As a bachelor, I survived entirely on crockpot cooked foods. I threw a bunch of meat, veggies, and potatoes in the thing and let it cook while I was at work. It worked great.

Then one day after work I smashed it into a thousand pieces. It had been sitting empty on top of my fridge. I opened the door to grab a coke and it slid off, nailing me on the head. I lost it. Taking it by the cord, I escorted it outside and smashed the metallic frame into a crumpled tin ball. Then I took the porcelain bowl and smashed it into a million shards. I had had a bad day and didn't like getting hit in the head by a heavy appliance.

We all lose it sometimes

We all lose it at one time or another. While some of us may end up disemboweling cooking appliances, others scream at fellow motorists. Anger is part of being human. Yet, for some people it's a crippling vice. People like Bobby Knight.

I feel for this guy. Maybe most people don't, but I can't help it. Knight is the coach of the Indiana University basketball team, known for his raging and furious presence on the court. He's a tough man to work for. Uncompromising standards, confrontational in every way. A couple of incidents led to calls for his dismissal. In one, videotape surfaced of an incident in 1997 where he grabbed one of his players by the throat. In another more recent incident, he threw a vase against the wall near one of his secretaries. She wasn't too impressed.

Fed up with his nonsense

Fed up with his nonsense, officials at the university considered dismissing Knight. This wasn't an easy thought, considering the 763 victories in his college coaching career. In the end, though, he was allowed to continue as coach provided he could keep his hands to himself. He was also fined $30,000 and given a regular season three game suspension.

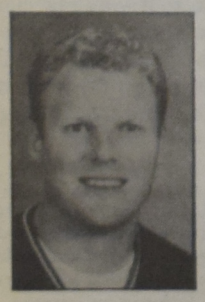
Bobby Knight is a driven guy. He has high expectations for his players, colleagues, and himself. He's used to having control. When that control is affected by a referee's call or a player who isn't performing, he loses it. I find it strangely fascinating to watch his military style of coaching.

In a sport where 18-year-old prima donnas strut around the courts and boardrooms, demanding pats on the back and seven-figure signing bonuses, here's a guy who simply demands excellence. Excuses go nowhere. Knight wants the best from people. Along with that, though, comes the intimidation and confrontation.

Vulnerability and giftedness connected

With the gifts that our Lord gives us, there always seem to be vices in our sinful nature which try to counter those gifts. It's no coincidence that the worst evils in our lives work against that which is most valuable in us. Satan knows where we're most vulnerable, and it's usually bedfellows with areas where we're most gifted.

In a public statement, Knight apologized and acknowledged his weakness: "Practically all of us have some problem to deal with in life...My temper problem is something I've had to deal with for as long as I can remember. I am working on it."



Maybe he's had a lot of breaks already, but Bobby Knight has his crosses to bear. Just like the rest of us.

Tim Antonides teaches Grade 8 and is a basketball coach at Surrey Christian School in Surrey, B.C.

Evangelism with a surf board

SANTA CRUZ, Calif. (EP) – A new breed of missionary is hitting the beach to spread the gospel to unreached people groups. Delegates from 12 different nations descended on Santa Cruz, California in February at the fourth annual Surf Ministries International conference to discuss outreach opportunities to surfers around the world. "We must express God's heart for the nations, and in surfing

there is a world people group, a global tribe of surfers to reach with the gospel," said International Director Brett Davis. "We want to offer the tool of Christian surfers to the church world wide." The group says that surfers often are the first to enter areas with unreached people long before tourists and traditional missionaries arrive. Surfers also visit countries that are traditionally closed to the Gospel, but open to their sport. To find out more visit: **www.surfministries.com**.

Evangelism with muscle

DALLAS, Tex. (EP) – The members of the new Christian Wrestling Federation give each other a pounding – but in good Christian love. The Texas-based group offers plenty of thumping and whacking, but without the vulgar language and sex that have become commonplace on secular wrestling programs. "We do all the kind of wrestling you see on TV, but leave out the parading women and all the negative stuff," founder Rob Vaughn told the *Dallas Morning News*. Vaughn, a Sunday school teacher and former college football player, wrestles under the name "Jesus Freak." Other wrestlers go by the names "Angel," "Apocalypse" and "The Beast." The group, which has about a dozen wrestlers, debuted May 10 at the Family Cathedral of Praise in Mesquite, Tex.

Church News

Christian Reformed Church

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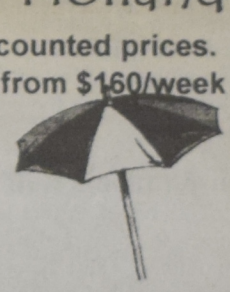

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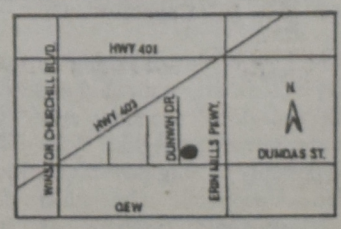

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Globalization

Would you like fries with that faith?

Brian Walsh

Globalization is the new world religion, argues Brian Walsh. Progress is its underlying myth, unlimited economic growth its foundational faith, the shopping mall (physical or online) its place of worship, consumerism its overriding image, "I'll have a Big Mac and fries" its ritual of initiation, and global domination its ultimate goal.

"We are watching the beginnings of a global economic boom on a scale never experienced before. We have entered a period of sustained growth that could eventually double the world's economy every twelve years and bring prosperity for – quite literally – billions of people on the planet. We are riding the early waves of a 25-year run of a greatly expanding economy that will do much to solve seemingly intractable problems like poverty and to ease tensions throughout the world. And we will do it without blowing the lid off the environment….

"These two metatrends – fundamental technological change and a new ethos of openness – will transform our world into the beginnings of a global civilization ... that will blossom through the coming century."

Inspirational stuff

This bit of inspirational prose comes to us from the journalistic mouthpiece of the cybernetic revolution of global capitalism, *Wired* magazine. Pay close attention to the language. We are at the "beginnings" of something "never experienced before." In a world of "sustained growth" and a "greatly expanding economy," driven by technological "change" and a "new ethos of openness," "intractable problems" will be solved, the world will be "transformed," and a "global civilization" "will blossom." Pretty inspirational stuff! And I do mean "inspirational." I mean, where else do we meet language about solving problems that have previously been intractable, radical new beginnings, transforming the world, an ethos of openness, and the blossoming of life? Doesn't all of this sound just a tad religious?

Now how could something so clearly materialistic as the shift to a centralized global economy ever be confused with a religion? What could possibly be religious about a borderless economic order ruled by transnational corporations moving capital around in cyberspace and exploiting public resources for private economic gain? What could be religious about a free market of unrestrained competition in which we can all fish in each other's ponds without worrying about outmoded notions of national sovereignty or local control of resources? And how could the hope of a rising economic tide that will "lift all boats" ever be construed as a religious hope?

Never mind the problem that only people with the capital resources to own fishing gear get to fish in other folk's ponds. And never mind the fact that if you don't have the resources to actually own a boat then a rising tide is more like a Mozambican flood than a symbol of hope. These are just glitches in the system. They don't point to anything like a religious vision at work here.

Globalism wants more than your pocketbook, it wants your soul.

McWorld religion

Well, consider the words of one of the most eloquent prophets of post-Cold War global capitalism, Francis Fukuyama. In his celebrated article, "The End of History?" Fukuyama intones that "the laws of economic efficiency and growth have replaced the divine plan." Now to replace the divine plan could be seen as a decidedly non-religious move. We are now in a post-religious culture because the materialistic ideals of economic growth have replaced older, now discredited, beliefs about God somehow being sovereign over the world. The sovereignty of God went first, then went the sovereignty of the nation state. Both to be replaced by the sovereignty of autonomous global economic forces that promise to bring prosperity to all. But notice there is still sovereignty in history and there is still promise. Sovereignty and promise! That still sounds religious to me.

Here's my point. It seems to me that when a cultural force in history promises nothing less than the blossoming of a new civilization in which there will eventually be an end to international conflict, the resolution of intractable problems like poverty and environmental degradation, and an increased prosperity to all – even though all the current evidence seems to contradict this promise – then we are dealing with something bigger than free trade, the lifting of tariffs, money speculation, and exploitation. We are facing the most powerful, fastest growing and successful religion in the history of the world. And what is fantastic about this religion is that it actually doesn't require any volitional choice of its converts.

In a famous essay, Benjamin Barber described the dynamics of globalization as the emerging "McWorld" culture: "McWorld is a product of popular culture driven by expansionist commerce.… It is about culture as commodity, apparel as ideology."

COMSTOCK PHOTOS (2)

"Can we justify the assumption of global capitalism that it is permissible 'to ruin one place or culture for the sake of another'?"

In such a commodity culture, various products become "icons of a lifestyle," and shopping malls become "the new churches of a commercial civilization" in which everything is "constructed around image exports creating a common world taste around common logos, advertising, slogans, stars, songs … and trademarks." Icons, churches, image, logos, songs.

Do you see the pattern here? When a religion aggressively proselytizes and seeks to transform the world, its most important resource is its images. You see, it is image that transforms the imagination and it is imagination that engenders a lifestyle. And what globalization does better than anything else is transform the imagination. That is why the entertainment and advertising industries are always the first wave of the emerging global consciousness. The world domination of McDonald's has less to do with food consumption (you call that stuff food??) than it does with capturing a market by capturing the appetites – both culinary and cultural – of a population.

Borders melting

In his book, *Mustard Seed versus McWorld*, futurist Tom Sine puts it this way: "Borders are melting and distance is dying as five billion of us now shop at the same macromall and stare transfixed at the same electronic images."

And those images, whether on a television set or a computer screen, are not simply about increasing free trade and free enterprise; rather, they "are working to redefine what is important and what is of value in people's lives all over the planet." What is at stake in globalization is not only the production and consumption of products (such things are increasingly less relevant in cybercapitalism), but more importantly, the construction of a homogenized global consumerist consciousness. Globalism wants more than your pocketbook, it wants your soul.

"Wait a minute," someone is bound to say. "Capitalism is about capital, it's about money. Religion is about faith."

Let me respond. Apart from the fact that religion's detractors love to point out the various ways in which religion is about money, I want to raise the question of whether capitalism is about faith. Now faith is invariably related to some kind of overarching story (what postmodernists call a meta-narrative) that gives meaning and direction to life. Such stories are always rooted in certain kinds of beliefs or assumptions that are foundational to the tale they tell. These assumptions and these kinds of stories are usually argued from, not argued to. They are the basis of any argument and are not, in the end, finally provable. That is, they require faith.

Proselytizing progress

Given this little bit of phenomenology of faith, what might we say about globalization? To begin with, let's note that global capitalism is the most recent (and most virulent) chapter in a story that has its roots in the age of discovery, the industrial revolution and the Enlightenment. This is the story of progress, which proclaims with all the certainty of faith that civilization will blossom, peace will reign, and we will enter into an age of prosperity if we will allow human reason to freely investigate the world by means of the scientific method and transform that world through technological power in order to realize our highest aspirations — economic growth. This belief in the ineluctable progress of autonomous humanity is the underlying faith or religion of western culture.

Now this grand tale of progress is a myth that requires faith at the best of times, but especially when none of its promises have been realized. International tensions have increased over the last one hundred years, the environment continues to be raped, and the rise of prosperity for the wealthy has been accompanied by increased poverty, starvation, homelessness, and misery for the majority of the world's population. There is something wrong with this story.

Blind, self-interested faith

But the story has certain foundational assumptions that also require faith. I mean, is it self-evidently true that a limited, finite world can sustain unlimited economic growth? Can we provide an empirical justification for the belief that economic prosperity for the controllers of capital will necessarily result in increased prosperity for all? Doesn't it require faith to believe that economic growth is the driving force of history? And on what basis, other than a perverse kind of blind and self-interested faith, can we justify the assumption of global capitalism that it is permissible (in Wendell Berry's words) "to ruin one place or culture for the sake of another"?

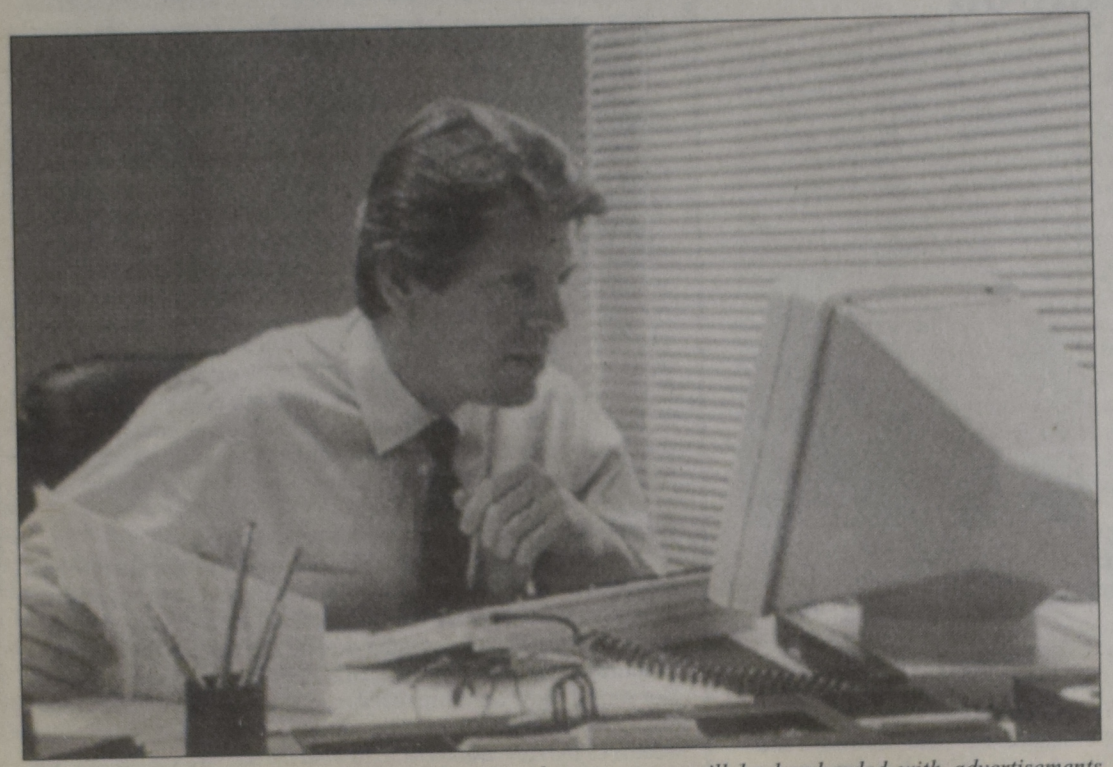
Globalization isn't just an aggressive stage in the history of capitalism. It is a religious movement of previously unheard of proportions. Progress is its underlying myth, unlimited economic growth its foundational faith, the shopping mall (physical or online) its place of worship, consumerism its overriding image, "I'll have a Big Mac and fries" its ritual of initiation, and global domination its ultimate goal.

So remember, if you buy into global consumerism, you are joining a religious movement that will likely require more of you than your money. Your soul is at stake here.

Brian J. Walsh is the Christian Reformed Chaplain to the University of Toronto and teaches at Wycliffe College. This article first appeared in the* Varsity, *a campus newspaper at the University of Toronto.

Info Tech

Gadgets, software upgrades, and chasing after the wind



"Buy a brand new computer today and in less than three years you will be bombarded with advertisements seducing you to discard it and buy a new model."

Charles C. Adams

Last week I received an advertisement in the mail inviting me to upgrade my Bible software to the latest version. I must confess that I was tempted.

The program on my computer that enables me to quickly find any verse in the Bible, either by selecting the verse by name or by searching for key words, is the same one that I've been using for the last five years. I'm pleased with the way it works and have resisted spending seventy dollars to upgrade it to something with a little more glitz and pizzazz but what I believe would be no significant increase in functionality. And so last week I resisted again.

One of the chief distortions of our modern society is the frantic quest for the newest technological improvement.

But I *was* tempted. And while many of you may consider it harmless — perhaps even humorous — to be *tempted* to upgrade one's *Bible software*, it provided me with an occasion to reflect on one of the chief distortions of our modern society: the frantic quest for the newest technological improvement.

Then, just the other day, a student reminded me of a point made by Professor Bob Goudzwaard when he visited Dordt College a few months ago. Goudzwaard argued that our society has become too "goal oriented."

He said it is like we are living in a long tunnel. We cannot look back. We cannot take any detours. We can only look to the future and keep moving ahead.

Spirit of technicism

What Goudzwaard is referring to and what the Bible software update advertisement evidences is a characteristic of the spirit of *technicism*. It is a form of dissatisfaction that results in an urge to change one's present condition for what is perceived to be a better one.

It is a chief driving force behind the seemingly infinite developments of technological gadgetry that characterize our present age. Computers are only the most obvious example. Buy a brand new computer today and in less than three years you will be bombarded with advertisements seducing you to discard it and buy a new model. The same spirit, however, drives the design, production and sale of everything from televisions, sound systems, and camcorders, to power tools, automobiles, and kitchen sinks.

And sad to say, it is even infecting areas of our lives that we do not easily associate with technology. Consider the exponential increase in divorce and remarriage during the last few decades. Sure, the primary causes are self-centredness and unfaithfulness. But this spirit of technicism that engenders dissatisfaction with that which is not "new," nourishes that self-centredness and that unfaithfulness.

Like all perversions, this extreme goal-orientation finds its origin in a part of God's good creation. As his image bearers and servants, we are called to be busy "tending the garden," so to speak. And that kind of service always has an aspect of goal-orientation associated with it. The trouble occurs when we sinners turn our focus from God to ourselves.

Goal-orientation becomes a god

We then turn that goal-orientation into an absolute. *It* becomes the god that we effectively serve. Paradoxically, that absolutized goal-orientation turns upon itself and *becomes the goal*. Like a dog chasing its tail, we get ensnared in the vicious circle of never being satisfied and always wanting more. The Scriptures speak directly to this perversion. Consider those words of wisdom from the book of Ecclesiastes:

Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income. This too is meaningless. As goods increase, so do those who consume them. And what benefit are they to the owner except to feast his eyes on them? (Ecc. 5:10-11)

The posture of obedience that stands in stark opposition to this paradoxically recursive materialism can be found in the New Testament. Consider Paul's letter to the Hebrews:

Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." (Heb. 13:5)

Wealth applies with equal validity to technological gadgetry such as computers.

Even more to the point are Paul's words to Timothy:

But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. (I Tim. 6:6-9)

The Scriptures focus on the pursuit of wealth and we generally read that to mean money. But that word wealth applies with equal validity to technological gadgetry such as computers, camcorders, and software.

Our society knows nothing of Christ's command that we deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow him as obedient servants seeking to meet the needs of our neighbors before our own needs. In fact the whole economic system of the west is predicated upon the assumption that we are each out to serve first ourselves with the best we can afford. The individual pursuit of happiness, the good life, that's the American way. But it's the precise opposite of *the Way*, *the Truth*, and *the Light*.

Hilariously ironic

And so we arrive at the hilariously ironic point in history where Bible software is hawked to consumers by appealing to their self-centered pursuit of the latest and greatest.

If Jesus called the Pharisees of his day a "brood of vipers," what words do you think he might choose to describe the *techno*-Pharisees of today?

This article appeared previously as a reflective piece on Plumbline, a program of KDCR, the radio voice of Dordt College, Sioux Center, Iowa. Charles Adams is Professor of Engineering at Dordt College.

Three Calvin students land patent

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (Calvin College) — On Saturday, May 6 Calvin College engineering majors gathered for a banquet and an opportunity to present the results of their Senior Projects.

The year-end gathering has been a tradition on campus for over a decade now. But this year Calvin seniors witnessed an inspirational first at the banquet. They saw three former Calvin students receive a plaque and a check saluting them for landing the school's first-ever patent — United States patent number 5,984,416.

The trio — Rachel teBrake, Alsion Stahl and Stacey Waldo — earned the patent as a result of a Senior Project they did during the 1996-97 school year.

Adjustable armrest with memory

They worked with Prince Corporation's David Spykerman who asked them to think about how to design an adjustable armrest for a vehicle. But not just any adjustable armrest, one with "memory." In other words, if it was raised and lowered it would return to the exact same position it had been in. Not only that but it had to be simple to make and cost under $10.

The trio delivered. They invented an armrest that, says Calvin professor Ned Nielsen, is "so simple you think anyone could do it. But they didn't. These three women did it, as Calvin seniors."

The patent includes the names of the three women and Spykerman as "inventors" and of Calvin College and Prince Corporation as "assignees." Nielsen says his research has not uncovered another patent assigned to Calvin College. And the great thing, he says, is that three seniors landed the honor for Calvin.

All three women graduated with degrees in Engineering and are working in engineering-related fields.

New wave of violence between Muslims, Christians sweeps across Ambon

AMBON, Indonesia (EP) — Sectarian violence erupted in the Moluccas May 16. More than 40 people were killed and more than 100 injured in six days of rioting between Muslims and Christians in Ambon, Indonesia. The violence coincided with the arrival of an estimated 2,200 Islamic extremists in the region who said they were going to Ambon to wage a jihad, or holy war, against the local Christian population in the Moluccas. Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) says it received reports that suggest a cargo vessel carrying containers of weapons arrived in Ambon recently.

COURTESY VOICE OF THE MARTYRS

This cross, burned during the destruction of an Indonesian church, was placed back in the new sanctuary (right).

Calls for a jihad

Calls for a jihad against Christians in Maluku were raised at a rally attended by 5,000 Islamic extremists in Jakarta, the Indonesian capital, on April 6. Attendees said 10,000 Muslims were receiving military training in preparation for being sent to Maluku. CSW was told that Muslims from Indonesia and the Middle East funded the jihad warriors. It is widely believed they are politically and ideologically motivated to discredit the democratically elected, inclusivist Indonesian government and President Abdurrahman Wahid, who is known for his support for religious tolerance. Most Indonesian Muslim leaders have condemned the planned jihad.

Christians say they fear Ambon is being used as a battleground to destabilize the elected Wahid government. They are calling on the Indonesian security forces to do their job and prevent the Christian community from becoming victims of a political power play.

Authorities closed down a jihad military training camp in April and gave the extremists one month from May 10 to leave Maluku, following up on the national government's promise to prevent a religious war. However, local officials in Maluku have failed to prevent extremists from entering Ambon, creating fears that the national authorities are unable to protect the Christian population.

Christian sources in Ambon reported fighting between two districts in Ambon city that quickly escalated to other areas. Three truckloads of Muslim rioters were reportedly brought in and released to attack other Christian locations. Christians reportedly evacuated 22 foreign visitors, including two British reporters, after mobs rioted and set fires near a hotel.

Christian properties attacked

Witnesses claim hundreds of jihad warriors, armed with rifles and grenade launchers, attacked Christian properties on May 17. The next day a Christian church and other Christian properties were torched in the Ahuru Karang Panjang area of Ambon. According to agencies in Ambon, the majority of the casualties were people shot by the security forces trying to disperse the rioters.

After a recent visit to the region, CSW reported on the acute fear felt by locals of an escalation of violence and attempts to 'cleanse' many parts of the Mollucas of Christians as a result of the anticipated arrival of the jihad warriors. Sectarian violence has already claimed over 3,000 lives, both Muslim and Christian, and hundreds of thousands of civilians have been displaced. Several thousand refugees have fled into the mountains where there is little food or medical care.

Ambon's church leaders are pleading for the immediate withdrawal of the troops, many of whom originate from nearby Java and Sulawesi. According to the leaders, the jihad troops must be withdrawn before there can be any peace or security in the region.

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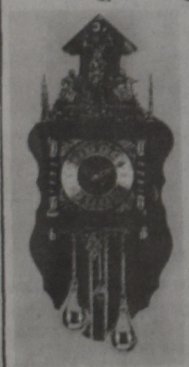

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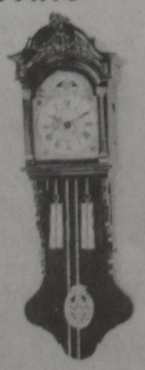

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State implements sharia, amputates man's hand

ZAMFARA, Nigeria (Compass) — A convicted thief had his right hand amputated in Nigeria's Zamfara state in late March, becoming the first victim of the Islamic legal system introduced in the state last year. The man, Bello Buba, is said to have stolen a cow.

He was arrested, tried and convicted by an Islamic court in Zamfara state in accordance with the new Islamic legal code. The amputation follows the controversial planned implementation of "sharia" (Islamic legal system) in several northern Nigerian states. The federal government, human rights organizations and Christian leaders condemned the act, seeing the implementation of sharia as the gradual Islamization of Nigeria. After religious riots in Kaduna in late February left hundreds dead, the federal government directed all states in the country to suspend the implementation of the Islamic penal code in an attempt to avert further bloodshed.

Other states want to implement sharia

At an April 14 press conference, the majority leader in the State House of Assembly (legislature) said the Bauchi state government in north-central Nigeria will implement "sharia" very soon. He added that the move is coming despite the federal government's announced suspension of the Islamic legal system in early March. Not surprisingly, the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) has reiterated its objection to the adoption of sharia. The state chairman of CAN, Rev. Dauda Marafa, said the adoption of the law was politically motivated and in variance with the country's constitutional rights of individuals, especially the Christians.

The Governor of Katsina state in northern Nigeria has assured Muslims in his state that he will also implement "sharia." On April 19, he sent a bill to the State House of Assembly that, if passed, would install sharia in the state. He urged Muslims to not be disturbed by statements they hear from Christian leaders on the sharia issue. When asked how this would affect Christians, the Katsina State Chief Judge replied, "It is to be emphasized that the sharia law applies only to the Muslims in the state and would not apply to those of other faiths or beliefs." Anglican Bishop of Katsina James Kwasu did not seem surprised by the developments. He said Muslim government officials in the state have always implemented anti-Christian policies.

Bomb injures Christians gathered at crusade in India

NEW DELHI, India (EP) — Over 21 people were injured, six critically, when a bomb exploded during a crusade by the Gospel Association of India (GAI). The group regularly conducts religious crusades in India with the help of over 100 pastors, and also airs television specials during Christmas and Easter. In addition, the ministry operates schools, church planting programs and college outreach groups. The bomb went off in the middle of the audience while crusade leaders were issuing an altar call. Authorities are still investigating the crime and searching for suspects, but they have determined that the bomb was homemade. No one has claimed responsibility for the bomb yet; there is no news as to whether the act was politically or religiously motivated.

South African IRS merges with Potchefstroom University

South Africa (REC) The Institute for Reformational Studies in Potchefstroom has long been a source for Christian literature. It has striven to focus on African situations from a Calvinian perspective. With the retirement of its longtime director, Bennie van der Walt, the functions of the IRS have now been taken up by the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education. The philosophy department will take over some functions of the IRS, while others will be assigned to a new Centre for Faith and Scholarship.

News Comment

Nose for News

Bert Hielema

NO EARTHSHAKING news this time, nothing striking that needs my comments, so allow me to probe underneath the surface where I see some dangerous fault lines, with enough potential for harm to make people in the know quite worried.

No, this time I will not remind you of the ticking time bomb of global warming, or the looming possibility for an economic crash, or the ever growing US trade imbalance, which in March set another record. This time I am referring to something more subtle.

What worries me — because I too use it every day — is the matter of computers and the Internet. Of course, I could do without them: go back to snail-mail letters and fax my column to CC, where they really prefer to get my piece electronically, eliminating the need for re-typing it. What then is so worrisome about the computer and the Internet?

The problem is serious enough for the U.S. government and the computer industry to call a special summit on computer security. This took place right after the world experienced another of these viruses, which now affect our PC quite regularly. The problem with these destructive attacks is that they are so easily carried out: none were developed by computer geniuses.

In Montreal an average teenager shut down Amazon.com using a method one notch more complicated than programming a VCR to see a show a bit later or setting an auto dialer on a telephone so that it is impossible for real callers to get through. The ILOVEYOU virus, thought to have come from Manila, also was a simple macro written in a fairly easy language, called Visual Basic, that took advantage of the lack of security on Microsoft's e-mail package. No software company will offer a job to these boys.

SO WHAT IS THE NEWS? Is my nose leading me astray here? No, I don't think so. The news is that it is now possible for a run-of-the-mill unsophisticated computer programmer to create complete chaos. It used to be that only a highly intelligent but unstable person could throw the PC world into disarray (For the un-initiated, PC stands for Personal Computer). Today a not particularly bright crackpot can achieve the same.

THE TROUBLE IS THAT there are only a few brilliant people in the world, but there are lots of screwed-up ones. Based on the ratio of fools to geniuses, the likelihood of future attacks is pretty high. Once a recession hits and people get the boot (and a few computer operators and software specialists are already being let go), rather than return to their job with a firing gun as many fired people have done, they may choose a much easier and much more lethal way: harm their former employer by fouling up their computer system. Also there is a nasty anarchist streak creeping into society, and nothing will create more anarchy than throwing computer systems out of whack.

We all know that computers play an ever larger role in our lives. ATMs, credit cards, debit cards are only possible because of computers and their networks. Our current economic boom has been the result. Both the PC and the Internet are truly revolutionary and — and here is the news — are extremely susceptible to tinkering. This vulnerability stems from the simple fact that they were not invented to do what they are used for now. The Personal Computer was developed as a stand-alone system, to serve the need of one person, hence its name. I, and everybody else with word processing units, would not intentionally want to harm our own systems or databases, so when computers were developed, security was not even considered because it was not seen as a device to communicate with others. The same is true with e-mail which was built around a few academic mainframes — real big computers.

Yet out of this primitive connectivity came the explosion of the World Wide Web, where even I have a web page (**www.geocities.com/hielemab**), one of the many millions of web sites in the world. From this shaky base, the system has grown beyond the control of all users. Almost any young kid can knock out hundreds of corporate systems because the foundation of modern computing, the operating system, was designed for one user who would treat it right. The news is that its very success has created a menace. All of us in society are now dependent on these systems for our daily work and, unwittingly, while we work we can spread harmful programs.

IF AN ORDINARY GUY or disturbed adult can wreak such havoc, imagine what a concerted effort by a well-funded government intelligence agency can do. And there lies its greatest danger: this entire system, at this primitive stage of development, opens particularly North America and Western Europe up to attack, especially from countries such as China or Russia, which are not nearly so dependent on PCs and the Internet but do have the intellectual skills needed to cripple our system.

The real threat from nations with evil intent will no longer be nuclear attack but cyber attack. Even though these states have the Bomb, they won't launch nuclear attacks for fear of reprisal, but a virus attack is a different matter because we depend on computers. They don't.

This is not all. The Internet is open to other misuse as well. Not only can the entire system be paralyzed, it can also be exploited by criminals. On sale online are fake passports, birth certificates, driver's licences, college diplomas, even IDs for police officers and Secret Service agents. These authentic-looking fakes often have holograms, bar codes, magnetic stripes and other security features which frequently are added to genuine documents to prevent counterfeiting. All this enables people to steal other peoples' identities and so get loans or apply for jobs for which they are not qualified.

And here is one of the great ironies of this millennium. This past week TIME Magazine came out with a special issue on "The Hottest Jobs of the Future" which includes an article, "What will we do for WORK?" by Tom Peters, a management consultant who makes a living giving seminars to large companies. He charges something like $50,000 per day, so he must be good or an excellent fake. At any rate, when TIME asks a person for an article, he or she is recognized as an authority on the subject. However, what he says goes completely against what I have proposed earlier: his entire thesis, his total projection is based on — you have guessed it — the Web. He introduces his "Work" essay by giving five cornerstone statements of which Number 1 is that the so-called dotcoms, the companies with internet-related businesses will introduce such stiff competition that they will dominate the market. By implication he assumes that all of us — without exception — will shop not in stores, but online.

His second assumption is also based on the Internet. All companies will conduct all of their bookkeeping, inventory, ordering, manufacturing, in a word, everything, through Internet-related software. His third hypothesis is that whatever white-collar jobs are still left, such as making entries into books, thus keeping hard records, will be done in India, creating 50 million jobs there, at a fraction of the cost. Of course, transmitting that information will also be done via the Internet.

His fourth assumption is that because Ford, GM, Daimler-Chrysler, have pooled all their parts suppliers into a single network, the so called B2B (Business to Business), this sort of electronic commerce will serve as an example for the entire economy. His fifth principle is that time will be compressed. It took the radio 37 years to get to 50 million homes. The Web got there in 4 years. Based on the last fact, Mr. Peters estimates that His Brave New World will be upon us in 10 years or less.

AND WHAT SORT OF JOBS will be the 10 Hottest? Number 1 is Tissue Engineers, people who manufacturer human parts. Job No.2 will be also related to the human body: Gene programmers. Doctors will rely on these people to prevent a variety of diseases including certain cancers. Job No.3 is also related to the human body: the stomach. "Pharmers" will raise crops and livestock that have been genetically engineered, to produce therapeutic proteins, such as vaccine-carrying tomato and drug-laden milk from cows and sheep.

The fourth most likely occupation will be "Frankenfood Monitors", people who are on the lookout in case any of the above-mentioned gene experiments misfire. I'll quickly list the other 6 hottest jobs : Data Miners, people who pinpoint what we are and do; Hot-line Handymen, men or women who take care of our gadgets; Virtual Reality actors, sort of personal entertainers; Narrowcasters, a new concept of advertisers geared to personal tastes; Turing Testers, computer engineers who produce machines that sound and act like humans; and the last one: Knowledge Engineers who are Artificial-Intelligence brokers and will translate our expertise into software, then downsize us.

AND WHOSE JOBS WILL DISAPPEAR? Because of the Internet we no longer will need stockbrokers, auto dealers, mail carriers, insurance agents and real estate brokers, teachers, printers, stenographers, orthodontists, prison guards, truckers, housekeepers and fathers. Why no fathers? Because between in vitro fertilization and cloning, dads could become dinosaurs. Moms, too, might vanish, with the possibility looming of an artificial womb.

Well, there you have it. Ten years from now. Is that the sort of world the Lord had in mind when he created his cosmos and counted it good seven times after each act of creating and very good when he saw how the whole world perfectly fitted together?

We are putting all our eggs in one basket, the questionable and extremely vulnerable basket of the Internet, just as the people did, way back, when they set out to build the Tower of Babel. Then God seeded a little confusion which sort of upset the human plans. There is a striking similarity then and now: both the Tower of Babel and the Internet reach into the heavens for world-wide communication.

Psalm 115:16 says: the heavens belong to the Lord. The earth he has given to us humans. Is that why the Tower of Babel was not allowed to be finished? Is that why ultimately the Satellite-Internet-Technology will fail also?

Bert Hielema sends this article via the satellite-internet system from Sioux Center, Iowa to the CC editor. He most of the time lives in Tweed, Ont.

Love is strong as death; but nothing else is as strong as either; and both, love and death, met in Christ. How strong and powerful upon you, then, should that instruction be, that comes to you from both these, the love and death of Jesus Christ!

... John Donne

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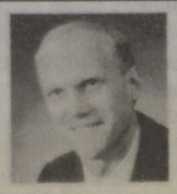

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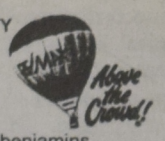

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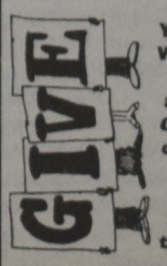

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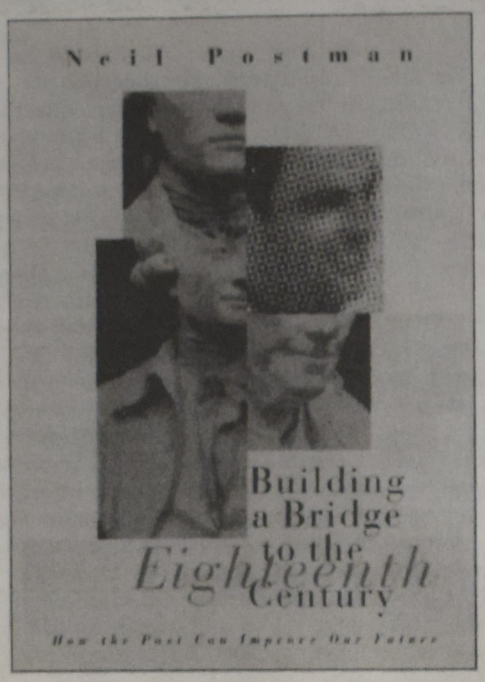
Info Tech

Building a bridge to the 18th century

Ron DeBoer

Recently, a computer chip company in southern California announced it was marketing a new "gigahertz" computer chip with memory capabilities never before created. Intel, a company known for its pioneering of computer chips, expects to double the size of the chip by the end of this year.

What has taken all of human civilization to create will take less than six months to double. According to Bill Gates, in his book Business at the Speed of Thought, *all information — history, medical, personal, media — since the beginning of world history now doubles every six months through technological advances and the easy flow of information.*



Technological advances rush toward us at break-neck speed. But what good are all of these new capabilities? Neil Postman, in his latest book, *Building a Bridge to the 18th Century*, says the answer to this question is always *speed*. In fact, over a lifetime, a person might save up about a month and a half of time. And how will they use this saved time? To watch television, suggests Postman.

Enlightenment thinking

As we head into the 21st Century, he warns, we need to ask ourselves why we continue to strive for technological advances. Twentieth and 21st century technology lacks purpose. As a champion of 18th Century ideas, Postman believes we must build a bridge to the 18th Century and carry Enlightenment thinking about technology and progress to the new millennium.

The 18th Century was a time when earlier doctrines were criticized from the viewpoint of reason. Firmly established understandings of the world were thrown into question. Ideas that the world was an ordered place flourished; superstitions faded. Most significantly, ideas of progress emerged.

Technological and moral progress

Postman argues that the overriding philosophy that characterized the 18th Century was that everything should have a purpose. The 18th Century was captivated by a "narrative dream" that the world would progress to an ideal state. Eighteenth Century thinkers saw a direct relationship between technological progress and moral progress. Technological change was to be promoted for the good of humankind. This thinking gave rise to many of the inventions that came in the 19th Century — the typewriter, the phonograph, the transatlantic cable, photography, the safety pin and the stethoscope. Each of these is necessary to basic communication or health care. Enlightenment was accompanied by reason; technology had purpose.

But as technology grew in the century that followed, its purpose was lost. By the 19th Century the "invention of the invention" took over. "We learned how to invent things and the question of 'why' receded in importance," says Postman.

Advance because we can

As we enter the 21st Century, he says, we no longer have a "narrative dream." We no longer believe we are working toward a promised land or golden age of prosperity with our new advances. We no longer have a belief system or an overriding philosophy by which we can judge technology and ask, "Is this valuable for the good of humanity?" We simply advance technology because we are able to, and we develop technology because it can sell in the global marketplace.

Postman poses a series of questions we must ask about technology to get at its purpose and value. What problem does the new technology solve?

Looking back at some of the inventions of the 18th Century, we see that a better, more efficient, often life-saving method was being forwarded. The photograph made preserving historical events possible; the stethoscope led to breakthroughs in the treatment of disease and sickness. In contrast, recently we see the development of things like voice-activated objects like doorknobs. What problem does a voice activated doorknob solve? asks Postman. Was it a problem to have to open doors with our hands?

Why constantly improve?

We buy faster computers and smoother-riding cars in the belief that these technologies must constantly improve. Was a 64 MB computer a problem that required a solution — a 128 MB computer? Will the "problem" ever be solved? Whose problem is it?

When problems are introduced just so new technologies can provide a solution. Postman argues, the individuals benefiting may be a small number — for instance those selling the solution — but soon everyone adopts the problem and accepts the solution, which they can inevitably purchase. Postman points out that not long ago airplanes were being developed that would fly people from New York to Los Angeles in half the six hours it now takes commercial airlines. The cost per airplane reportedly approached a billion dollars and the only individuals truly "needing" this new technology would be rock stars and movie actors. The purpose, of course, was speed. But, Postman says, most people, when asked, agreed that they would probably watch television in the three hours that were saved. The solution? Put TVs on all the existing airlines and save billions of dollars.

How will the poor cope?

What people and what institutions would be most harmed by technological "advances"? Although you'd never know it from TV commercials promoting the Internet, most people on earth do not have access to palm pilots, e-mail, Internet connections, and cell phones. When the western economy deems these things as essential, how will the poor cope? Postman foresees a day when technology will virtually take over in all aspects of life, and only 10 percent of the population will be working. If you're skeptical, consider the number of closed banks and the shrinking number of bank employees. What are we to do with the other 90 percent of the population a half century (or sooner) from now?

What people and institutions would benefit economically and politically from such a technological solution? There's a joke that asks, How many Microsoft employees does it take to screw in a lightbulb? The answer: None. Microsoft would declare darkness the standard. The problem with new technology that doesn't have any purpose other than speed and ease is that major technology companies assume the power to tell us what is important. Slowly we all start to believe we need cell phones. We convince ourselves that an electronic planner is essential. We acclaim the freedom e-mail offers because of its immediacy, and then enslave ourselves to it by checking it every waking hour.

What new problems introduced?

What new problems are introduced with the solutions of the old problem? This is perhaps the most significant question of all, and it demands wisdom for the future. The automobile, most would agree, is a wonderful and necessary invention. But it has brought on global pollution, death, and the need for increased law enforcement. Antibiotics fight infection, but they have weakened our immune systems so that we now suffer from many ailments more frequently.

Television has entertained and educated us, but it has led to decreased literacy, has created a consumer society and enabled political manipulation. The Benedictine monks invented clocks so they could say their prayers regularly, but, suggests Postman, had they known the clock would help merchants organize the working day they may have reconsidered. Had Guttenberg known the distribution of mass tracts would eventually lead to a split in the church, he may never have turned his wine press into a printing press.

What language changes have occurred because of technology? Are they good or bad? One of Postman's major themes about technology is the question of what has been lost with progress. He argues that language has changed due to technology and is in fact being manipulated to sell technology. For instance, "community" has now been reduced to mean people with the same interests. A community on the Internet exists only because of a common like or dislike for something. No longer does community stand for a group of people with diverse interests and opinions co-existing and sharing ideas to enlighten others about different points-of-view.

Town-hall non-events

"Electronic town hall meetings," Postman argues, are cleverly constructed, controlled television non-events and quite different from the 18th Century idea of people meeting face-to-face to talk about issues of concern to the community and to vote democratically. Today, after an electronic town hall meeting, CNN immediately runs a poll to show us what the majority thinks to manipulate the rest to think the same way. Postman goes on to point out how words such as "truth," "fact," "intelligence" and "law" have lost their meaning and have taken on new meaning in our technological culture, meanings which sometimes undermine their true meaning.

In short, Postman offers this advice to those of us struggling with the influence of technology in our lives: "I will use technology," says Postman, "when I judge it to be in my favor. I resist being used by technology." A simplistic statement, but one that prompts us to ask several important questions for an answer to emerge.

Ron DeBoer teaches media studies at Eastwood Collegiate Institute and is author of **The Nothings** *and the* **Lightbringer Series** *of media books for children. He can be reached at Ron_DeBoer@wrdsb.edu.on.ca*

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Corner Post

People-work, technology-work, Jesus-work

Elbert van Donkersgoed

Consider work in the year 2000: more work will be done in Canada than last year. There will be more productive activity, more goods produced, more needs met, more services provided, more infrastructure built and more access created than last year. Economic statistics confirm the optimism. The North American economy is booming. Central bankers are hinting at the need to raise interest rates to contain inflation.

But the rhetoric that economists have trained us to use doesn't let us understand how this "more work" in 2000 than in 1999 differs from the "more work" in 1950 compared to 1949.

But different it is and the stock market instinctively knows it. The recent wild ride for shares, especially shares in technology companies, hints at a paradigm shift of massive proportions in our economy.

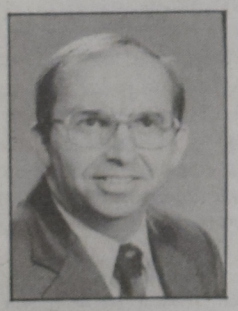
People-work vs. technology

Throughout human history, work has been defined as people-work — work done by human hands and minds. No longer. Work has become technology — work done by engines, assembly lines, streams of data, processing chips, nanotechnology and modified genes.

If one went by the valuations that our stock markets assign to certain technology firms, one might conclude that technology-work does not need to be profitable. A significant number of these highly capitalized tech firms have no short-term plan to show profit. The dramatic market gyrations of recent weeks suggest that we don't quite believe that businesses can survive without earnings. Somewhere, sometime there has to be enough real technology-work done to deliver comparable sums of goods produced, needs met, services provided, infrastructure built or access created.

In agriculture we know about wealth that comes from nowhere. In the '70s, when folks bought the farm next door at twice the price per acre you paid for your land — not many years before — you felt quite a bit richer. If you spent that feeling of optimism on personal consumption or just making the farm a nicer place to work, you found yourself in financial trouble in the high-interest-rate '80s.

Optimism that comes out of nowhere is different from optimism that is the result of profits earned or weekly pay cheques saved. It is hard to hang on to.



Yet there is optimism without cost. Jesus-work has created an enduring optimism for human kind that people-work and technology-work can never achieve. One need only to accept it.

Elbert van Donkersgoed is the Strategic Policy Advisor of the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, Canada.

Forests a big deal in Canada

- Canadians are stewards of 10% of the world's forests (ownership: 71% provincial; 23% federal and territorial; 6% private).
- Canada is the world's largest exporter of forest products.
- Approximately 840,000 Canadian jobs (or 1 in 16 Canadians) are in the forest sector.
- 337 communities are forest-dependent.
- Canadian forests provide habitat for more than 140,000 species.
- Canada's forests are fundamental to Canadian identity and are integral to the culture of Aboriginal peoples.
- Canadian forests offer a haven for recreation and spiritual renewal.

CANADA'S *forests*

Initiated and supported by the Canadian Forest Service, Canada's Model Forest Program (www.modelforest.net) is the largest program in the world designed specifically to develop new, practical ways of creating and maintaining healthy forests. The Canadian Forest Service is an active partner and the primary founder in each of the 11 model forests it has established across Canada under this program.

- News Canada

Unity, Schuller, share top billing at Hamilton's Festival of Faith

Walfried E. Goossen

HAMILTON, Ont. — The first Millennium *Christian Festival* in Hamilton once again proved that Christians can do "it" as well as anyone. The two day event (April 10 and 11) at Copps Coloseum was breathtaking and expertly produced. The theme was unity. The star was Robert Schuller.

Musical Mayor Morrow

Mixing the traditional with the contemporary, it featured outstanding performers such as Joe Carter, the Afro-American baritone who makes the late Paul Robeson sound like a soprano. Hamilton Mayor Bob Morrow, well known locally for his musical talents, accompanied Mr. Carter on the piano. Morrow was also co-chairman of the Festival with Rev. Bruce Woods. The interdenominational mass choir of 600 voices was inspiring. Rev. Woods said every Protestant denomination as well as the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church took part in the worship celebration

Unity and merger are the current buzz words in both the secular and religious worlds. Church amalgamations, secular institutional mergers and a host of desperate measures are announced in the daily news. The Festival in Hamilton can't be called a desperate attempt, but how much effect the beautiful music, Scripture readings and the "possibility thinking" of Robert Schuller will have on area Christians is a question very open to speculation.

Schuller, whose church background is Reformed, emphasized the importance of faith and the courage to try the apparently impossible, which is possible with God. An M.A. in psychology as well as divinity, Dr. Schuller must be heard a number of times before his full gospel faith can be recognized and appreciated. Unfortunately, the spiritual depth was somewhat obscured by his health and wealth message. He often sounds like a Christian motivational speaker. His messages are almost always repeats, couched in catchy, easy to memorize phrases. It is the psychologist in him and his natural gift for communicating with his listeners which enable him to make memorable slogans which adapt well to bumper stickers.

Schuller not superficial

However, Robert Schuller is not superficial. He says what he believes and believes what he says: Jesus is the Son of God, Immanuel, God with us. He was crucified and resurrected for our sake. Salvation is by faith, by his grace.

In a confused world like ours, a sinful world in which godliness is too often scorned, an encouraging voice reminding us of God's love for each of us and for humanity in general is a much needed voice.

Like an old friend

Hearing him from a distance of several hundred feet, among 6000 worshippers, rendered his image smaller than on TV, but his powerful voice sounded like that of an old friend. The choir did no dishonor to Handel's Hallelujah Chorus and some other beloved favourites.

Efforts such as the Millennium *Festival of Faith*, initiated by Rev. Wood's vision, will enhance understanding and tolerance and reduce discrimination among Christians and races. We won't come up with a new recipe, but we will be salt on the bread of life. The future of the Millennium *Festival of Faith* could be a bright one. With wide participation and inspiring guests, and ordinary Christians hungering for unity and peace, the Lord will surely continue to bless this effort.

In 2001 the Festival is to take place in Toronto, then return to Hamilton in 2002.

Calvin grads and trustees hear address by Dr. Alvin Plantinga

CC Staff

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. — In his commencement address to the first Calvin graduating class of this millennium, Alvin Plantinga, Prof. of Philosophy at Notre Dame and himself a Calvin grad, recalled what he valued most about his education at Calvin several decades ago.

"At Calvin, at that time," he said, "we were in dead earnest both about the Christian faith and about scholarship. More than that, we were in dead earnest about Christian scholarship. This is a world I could not have entered elsewhere. At that time, there was no other college where this vision was as explicit and self-conscious or shared by as much of the total community."

Christian devotion prevails

That same devotion to a Christian vision of scholarship, he continued, still prevails and has improved. The uniqueness of this Reformed vision is its commitment "to work out and embody our faith in our entire lives."

Plantinga pointed out that "Reformed Christians have always placed a high premium on the life of the mind, on the attempt to cultivate the image of God in ourselves by cultivating his gifts of reason and understanding."

Why cultivate gifts?

"Why cultivate these gifts?" he asked. Because believers are engaged in a struggle, "a contest for men's and women's souls." Three main perspectives are today competing in this contest over how we see the world, ourselves and the good life: Christianity, naturalism and relativism.

Naturalism banishes God from the world and explains everything in terms of evolutionary processes. Relativism rejects all notions of a shared truth and leaves us only with interpretations, all equally true.

"These anti-Christian perspectives are widespread," he warned. "They dominate contemporary intellectual life and much of contemporary culture. They assail us from all sides; it is not easy to escape their influence. They threaten the intellectual wholeness and integrity of the Christian community; they make it hard for us to think about ourselves and our world in Christian ways."

Reformed institutions needed

It is for this reason that the Christian community needs institutions like Calvin College and for this reason that Reformed believers sacrifice to establish them.

Plantinga addressed his words to 850 graduates – 500 women and 350 men – and to the Board of Trustees which had been meeting on campus the same week. The board approved a preliminary budget of about $57 million.

News

Will Synod 2000 whole-heartedly affirm faith-filled women as full members of the Body of Christ?

A personal note from the editor. The following should perhaps have been turned into a news story about the efforts of Scarborough Grace CRC to bring before the upcoming CRC Synod their plea for a decisive embrace of women into all the ministries of the church. I've decided simply to print most of their "letter" to synod. It speaks for itself. It did, however, not speak for classis Toronto.

I know that it does not speak for all our readers. To be honest, the argument from Scripture never convinced me one way or the other. On Monday I can be convinced by those pro, and on Friday, by those con. Yet, I do support women in office. Why? Largely on practical grounds. Seeing how much more effectively women can minister in many situations, especially to other women, when most men would have been totally ineffective, convinced me that it is quite simply folly for the church to go on setting these gifts aside.

It reminds me of the fellow who got into a fight and got a good drubbing. All through the fight he used only one hand. As his friends picked him up off the ground, they asked him why he never used his other hand. "Well," he said, " They said I was supposed to fight him single-handedly."

So for me it has never been a "confessional" issue. The following, however, makes an eloquent case why it should be.

Sons and daughters of the resurrection are called by the Spirit to participate fully in the service and proclamation of God's kingdom of love, mercy, justice and peace. This confessional calling originates and reaches far beyond church orders and ecclesiastical synods. Although it can be hedged and stymied, it cannot be quenched!

Let us not, therefore, give in to fear. We are called to live in faith and hope, expressing our salvation in Christ with redeemed conscience, commitment, courage and humility. Let us welcome with joy and gratitude the gifts of the Spirit in faith-filled women, and encourage them to enrich the vision, ministry and worship of God's people.

As members of Scarborough Grace Christian Reformed Church, we feel compelled to urge Synod to make full use of women's gifts mandatory in all offices and assemblies of the Christian Reformed Church. At Grace CRC, it has long been our practice to affirm women's use of their gifts as deacons, elders, and ministers. Our convictions have been captured in a document entitled "Confessional Affirmation Regarding Full Participation in the Life of the Church and its Responsibilities," which received the unanimous support of the congregation in 1995 (See Appendix). We urge Synod to confess that in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ we all – men and women – participate *fully* in the life of the church, its responsibilities, its joys and its sufferings.

Response to synod's recommendations

We firmly believe Synod 2000 must make it clear, once and for all, that our *confessional* unity is rooted in Jesus Christ, and that our *denominational* unity must be a living expression of the biblical confession that "Jesus is Lord!" Our confessional declarations should shape our denominational practices, not vice-versa. The recognition that "full use of women's gifts is mandatory" must also be expressed in a synodical decision to ordain women as elders, ministers, and evangelists, without discrimination.

Full use of spiritual gifts

Synod should indeed recognize and promote "the full use of the gifts that the Spirit gives to all [the churches'] members, both women and men." But then, synod must be principially consistent and equally affirm qualified women's ecclesiastical right to ordination. Synod cannot in good faith and with a clear conscience fully embrace the biblical principle of gender-equality and, at the same time, severely constrict the application and implementation of this vital confessional principle for the sake of denominational problems due to certain "firmly held differences on the issue."

Synod should affirm equality

Synod should again affirm that all men and women are equally created in God's image. We all are equally called to reflect God's likeness. We all are equally challenged to be God's image-bearers in all our ways of life throughout God's creation. This biblical teaching is God-given. Therefore, this truth should be confessed publicly and practiced faithfully; that is, it should be preached and enacted consistently by all God's people in all our relationships, activities, institutions and organizations.

Response to synod's characterization of issue

Synod should not let the fact that the ordination-of-women issue has been characterized as "emotionally charged" stop it from making a definitive pronouncement on the issue. Previous synodical decisions on the issues of abortion, war, sexual abuse and exploitation, political and racial discrimination, environmental degradation, and economical and social oppression have been similarly characterized; however, recognizing these issues as being "emotionally charged" has not prevented past synods from making definitive pronouncements.

We urge Synod to do full justice to the issue of women in office in light of the cosmic scope of redemption and the sweeping significance of Jesus' life-transforming ministry of reconciliation. The committee characterizes the ordination issue as a "wisdom issue," indicating it is not an essential "confessional issue." In the process, the committee seems to limit the life-embracing meaning of "confessional" to "doctrinal" differences. Similarly, in their argument that it is not a "moral issue," the committee seems to limit the meaning of the moral covenant code to that which is summarized in the ten commandments, rather than that which is found in the all-encompassing "new covenant" established by Jesus Christ. In asserting that the ordination-of-women issue is a "wisdom" issue, the committee appears to similarly constrict the comprehensive nature of Jesus' redemptive work.

Listen to Biblical wisdom

The biblical wisdom literature, however, is fully comprehensive, ignoring no person or aspect of life in its plea to walk fully on the path of redemption. Numerous Scripture passages elaborate on the fundamental meaning of becoming wise in Christ. Time and again, these passages remind us of our creaturely calling to seek and practice biblical wisdom: to discern the spirits, to know the Truth and to act truly. Jesus, as the personification of wisdom, welcomes without discrimination all who ask for forgiveness of their sin, who desire the freedom to serve, who seek the coming of God's liberating reign and the practice of love, mercy, justice and righteousness.

As the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, any action (or failure to act) born out of any effort that fretfully constricts and stymies, blocks and postpones the work of the Spirit in any of our brothers or sisters, is not born of wisdom. Biblical wisdom requires no less than that we enable one another to lay hold of the redemptive birthright that is ours in the opportunity for full, faithful stewardship of our God-given gifts in his service. To do less would be morally unconscionable. We may not sell one another short. True wisdom requires that we move forward with understanding and compassion for one another, but that we do indeed move forward.

Concluding reflections

So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation; everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5: 16-18).

We all, men and women alike, have been given the liberating message and ministry of radical reconciliation in and through Christ. For this God-given, overarching responsibility, we personally – and our churches communally – urgently require a credible, pro-active, societal presence. For our creation-wide mission, we need deeper communal conviction and greater denominational coherence.

Therefore, we urge Synod to declare that we are called to confess and practice more faithfully our fundamental unity in Christ. We must do so by inviting, welcoming and enabling *all* God's gifted people, women and men alike, "in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ…to all the privileges of full communion,…to full participation in the life of the church,…and to its responsibilities, its joys, and its sufferings." Synod must recognize that all qualified men and women are entitled to participate fully in God's all-embracing ministry of reconciliation, both within and by all our churches, assemblies, agencies, institutions, and organizations.

In view of the foregoing, we recommend that Synod 2000 finally and immediately begin doing full justice to the biblical responsibilities and ecclesiastical rights of *all* confessing members in good standing, welcoming and encouraging both women and men to all offices within all the churches and assemblies of the Christian Reformed Church, its agencies, institutions and organizations.

Respectfully submitted,
Wendy Dyk
Mary Steenland
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Wedding

With thankfulness to the Lord,
Peter and Margaret Kingma announce the marriages of their children:
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MICHAEL BERNARD VANDERZWAAG
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and

DAVID PETER KINGMA
to
JULIE ANNE REITSMA
daughter of Martin and Trudy Reitsma of Brantford, Ont
on June 17, 2000.
Address: 11 Floral Dr., Guelph ON N1G 1R2

Anniversaries

Congratulations to Evert & Alice Van Sloten on their 40th wedding anniversary.

"Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good! For his mercy endures forever." (Psalm 36:1)
With praise and thanksgiving to God for his countless blessings, we are happy to announce the 40th wedding anniversary of our dear parents and grandparents,
EVERT and ALICE VAN SLOTEN
(nee BROUWER)
on June 15, 2000.
We pray that God will continue to bless them in the coming years.
John & Fran Van Sloten
Sarah, Thomas, Edward
Alan & Evelyn Van Sloten
Laurin, Katie, Rebecca, Melanie
Peter & Sharon Denesi
Alex, Jonathon
Edward & Christine Van Sloten
Nicholas
Anjay & Marlene Nirula
Chutney
An Open House will be held on Saturday, June 24, 2000 from 1-4 p.m. at 2199 6th Line, Oakville, Ont.
All friends and family are invited to join us there.
Best wishes only.
Address: 2199 - 6th Line, Apt. 217, Oakville ON L6H 5V3
905-845-4775

Anniversaries

Congratulations to Case & Jessie Timmerman on their 45th wedding anniversary.

1955 June 24 2000
Chatham, Ont. Chatham, Ont.
CASE and JESSIE TIMMERMAN
(nee BISSCHOP)
With joy and thanksgiving to God, we share the joy of our parents as they celebrate their 45th wedding anniversary. May God continue to bless you both in the years to come.
With love from your children and grandchildren:
Martin & Cathy – Kitchener, Ont.
Heidi, Katie
Art & Sharon – Conestogo, Ont.
Megan, Amy, Nicholas
Letty – Waterloo, Ont.
Ken & Paula – LaGrange, Ill.
Evan, Andrew, Elise
Gary – Smithers, B.C.
John & Jody – London, Ont.
Robbie
Jeanne – St. Catharines, Ont.
An Open House will be held on Saturday, June 24, 2000, from 2-4 p.m. at First Christian Reformed Church, 25 Tweedsmuir E., Chatham, Ont.
Best wishes only, please
Home address: RR 3, Chatham ON N7M 5J3

Obituary

Garyp, Fr. Barrie,
the Neth. Ont.
Feb. 21, 1930 - April 17, 2000
On April 17, after 70 years on earth, our Heavenly Father took our earthly father, grandfather and dear husband,
SYMEN KLOOSTERMAN
to himself.
"From everlasting to everlasting the Lord's love is with those who fear him, and His righteousness with their children's children." (Ps.103:17)
Loving husband of Ytje Kloosterman and loving Dad & Pake of:
Grace & Dirk Miedema – Ingersoll, Ont.
Walter, Paul, Trina, Austin
Eileen & Michael Fallon – Ancaster, Ont.
Sean and Simon
Correspondence Address:
Mrs.Ytje Kloosterman, RR 2, Minesing ON LOL 1Y0

"In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make straight your paths."

(Prov. 3:6)
Very thankful to the Lord who has kept us together all these years, we
TOM and HENNIE BERGSMA
hope to celebrate our 45th wedding anniversary together with our children and grandchildren.
The wedding took place on July 12, 1955, in the city of Groningen, the Netherlands. This being vacation time, we plan to have a get-together on June 24, 2000, with our extended family and long-time friends from the various places we lived in.
Our mailing address is: 221 Southfield Dr., Strathroy ON N7G 3V3.

Beilen Brockville
the Neth. Ont.
1950 June 21 2000
Psalm 91
The family of
HENK and RIEK BREIMER
(nee BOUWERS)
are grateful to the Lord for blessing them with 50 years together. We will celebrate the occasion with an Open House on June 24, 2000, D.V., from 2-4 p.m. at the Bethel CRC, Brockville, Ont.
Love, your children:
Jane (deceased) & George Antoniak – Halifax
Marg & Gus Westra – Stittsville
Theo & Mary Breimer – Ancaster
John & Elly Breimer – Kingston
Ed & Joann Breimer – Niagara Falls
and many grandchildren.
Congratulations, Mom & Dad,
Grand ma & Grandpa, on this wonderful occasion. Thanks for your love and care. May God continue to bless and keep you.
Home address: 324 First Ave., Brockville ON K6V 3C1

Obituary

On May 22, 2000, at God's appointed time, He gently took home his child,
GRACE SCHURINGA
in her 100th year.
We praise and thank our faithful God and Father for his comfort and loving care. Her husband Harmannes Pieter Schuringa preceded her on December 5, 1989.
Mother of:
Anne Broos
Hans & Trudy Uittenbosch
Rita & Andy Knibbe
Joe & Mary Schuringa
Fred & Anne Schuringa
Grandmother of 20 grandchildren and 44 great-grandchildren.
Born in the Netherlands, immigrated to Canada in July of 1948. She lived a full life of Christian witness.
Psalm 121
Correspondence address:
Joe Schuringa, 29 McMaster St., RR 5, Georgetown ON L7G 5G7

Consider placing a Personal Ad. $16.00/column inch per insertion. One time set-up fee is $35.00 for a box number. GST is extra..

Obituaries

Grootegast Edmonton
the Neth. Alta.
July 30, 1902 - May 22, 2000
"I have engraved you on the palm of my hand..."
Peacefully our Dad and Opa
ROELOF TABAK
passed away on May 22, 2000, into His glory forever.
He is survived by his children:
Kees (Rommy) Tabak – the Neth.
Roely (Sid) Vander Meulen – Edmonton
Martin (Geraldine) Tabak – Edmonton
Henk (Lillian) Tabak – Darwell
His daughters-in-law:
Co Tabak – Edmonton
Corrie Tabak – Edmonton
Nel Tabak – Cumberland, Ont.
His son-in-law:
Jan Hamelink – Edmonton
and numerous grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and great-great-grandchildren.
He was predeceased by his first wife, Martje, in 1960 and by his second wife, Maartje, in 1987, and by his children:
Gerrit Tabak – Edmonton
Jan Tabak – Edmonton
Sieds Tabak – Cumberland, Ont.
Ge Hamelink – Edmonton
A memorial service was held on May 25, 2000, at Trinity Christian Reformed Church, Revs. Vander Ploeg and Binnema officiating.
Correspondence address:
c/o S. Vander Meulen, 404-2011 - 137 Ave., Edmonton AB T5A 4W2

The Hague New Westminster
the Neth. B.C.
Jan. 19, 1939 - May 18, 2000
EDITH TEBOKKEL
after a seven month struggle with cancer.
John 14:2-3
Fondly remembered and deeply missed by her husband: Bill.
Children:
Debbie (Bob Hartemink)
Randy (Christina)
Jessica (Jeff Alexander)
Tobi (fiancé: Mike Paton)
and five grandchildren
Mother: Ditje Henneveld
Sisters: Jeanette and Hannie
Brother: Henoch
and many nieces, nephews and friends.
Correspondence address:
Bill TeBokkel, 8486 - 15th Ave., Burnaby BC V3N 1Y2

Personal

52-year-old Christian lady, divorced four years, wishes to meet a trustworthy and caring Christian man. Please send letters to **File #2701, c/o Christian Courier, 4-261 Martindale Rd., St. Catharines ON L2W 1A1**

Church News

Christian Reformed Church

Name Change: Effective May 1, 2000, the First Christian Reformed Church of Victoria, B.C. has changed its name to Victoria Christian Reformed Church.

Classifieds

Anniversaries

Amsterdam Wellandport
the Neth. Ont.
1950 June 28 2000

"Sing praises to the Lord, enthroned in Zion: proclaim among the nations what he has done." (Ps. 9:11)
"He who fears the Lord has a secure fortress, and for his children it will be a refuge." (Prov. 14:26)

With joy and thanksgiving to the Lord for blessing our parents and for blessing others through them we hope to celebrate the

50th wedding anniversary

of our parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents,

LEN and MIEP DEN BAK

To Papa and Nana with love from your children:

Marca & Carl Norg – Brantford
Dorothea & Dean (Ryan, Nicole, Joshua, Luke), Andrea, Eric & Adelle (James, Sayla), Allan, Heather, Allison
Leonie & Mike Vander Meer – Wellandport
Benjamin, Matthew, David, Rachel
Jeff & Judy den Bak – Wainfleet
Jordan, Jason, Jocelyn, Jaben

Please join us for an Open House/Garden Party which will be held, rain or shine, on Saturday, June 24, 2000, from 10 a.m. till 5 p.m. at Mike & Leonie Vander Meer's at 63563 Smith Rd., Wainfleet. 905-386-6534.
Best wishes only, please.
Home address: Len & Miep den Bak, RR 1, Wellandport ON L0R 2J0

Owen Sound Clinton
1950 June 18 2000

"I lift op my eyes to the hills; where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth." (Psalm 121: 1,2)

GERRIT and MIEN KLIJN-HESSELINK

are thankful to the Lord for 50 years of marriage and D.V. hope to celebrate this event, with their family, on Saturday, June 24, 2000.
Home address: 45 Charles St., Apt.204, RR 1, Clinton ON N0M 1L0

If there were a righteousness which a man could have of his own, then we should have to concern ourselves with the question of how it can be imparted to him.

But there is not. The idea of a righteousness of one's own is the quintessence of sin.

... Lesslie Newbigin

The First Christian Reformed Church of Ladner, B.C.
will be celebrating its
50th Anniversary
on
Wednesday, Oct. 11th, 2000,
with a special service at 8 p.m.
4594 - 54 "A" Street
Delta BC V4K 2Z8
All former members are welcome to attend.

Job Opportunities

300 sow farrow to finish **swine operation**, located in **southwestern Ontario**, is interested in employing a **herdsperson.** Housing and transportation are supplied. Close to church and school. Phone **519-683-6068**.

WYOMING, Ont.:
John Knox Christian School has an opening for a teacher in the **Grades 6/7** class. Please send resume and philosophy of education to:

Mrs. Margaret Noorloos,
Education Committee,
RR 1, Wyoming, ON N0N 1T0
Phone: 519-542-8614
Fax: 519-542-8614

Miscellaneous

MEADOW VALLEY HOUSE
Seniors Residence, Dundas, Ont.
24-hour assisted daily living care, meals, laundry service provided. English and Dutch spoken. For more info **call 905-627-1108.**

Miscellaneous

URGENT! The Ministry to Seafarers (Seafarers Centre) in Montreal is in need of **volunteers** for the summer months. Please contact Karin at **514-844-1476** or **514-935-4458**, fax **514-844-1472** or e-mail: **seafarer@colba.net**

THANK YOU

to all our friends who sent cards, flowers and best wishes for our 60th anniversary and to our friends from Florida and Athens who attended the open house on May 27, 2000. It was much appreciated.

Jacob & Agnes Frans

Home Sweet Classifieds!

YOUTH MINISTRIES DIRECTOR

Mission Statement: To serve others in becoming more faithful disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Maranatha is seeking a committed Christian who has a desire to show youth how to make Jesus Christ a part of their everyday life.
Responsibilities are to:

- ➜ Recruit, train and equip the youth workers of the church.
- ➜ Plan and program youth ministry events and activities.

Resumes by June 30, 2000 to:
260 McGill Blvd. W., Lethbridge AB T1K 4C6
phone:403-381-7744 fax:403-381-0972
e-mail:ahing@telusplanet.net Attn: Rob Vanderberg

HELP WANTED

Opportunities for students, retirees, housewives, etc. to earn some extra spending money.
(Transportation might be available in Welland, Ont.)

Must be healthy, reliable, non-smoker, non-drinker, and trustworthy.

Call 905-732-0150, if interested
in any or all of the following:

- → Gardening
- → Yard work
- → House cleaning
- → Knowledgeable "Fix-It Person"

VICTORIA REST HOME

265 Victoria St. N., Woodstock ON N4S 6W2
As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord!

Bent U op zoek naar een gezellig retirement home in S.W. Ontario? Victoria Rest Home is een vriendelijk en gezellig tehuis voor ouderen die niet meer voor zichzelf kunnen zorgen.
Er is 24 uur per dag volledige verzorging aanwezig. De nieuwe eigenaar, leiding, spreekt Engels, Nederlands en Fries.
Zondags is er een kerkdienst en 's winters is er gelegenheid voor bijbelstudie.

Please call for information Anneke Jansen 519-537-3950

Miscellaneous

FIRST CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH
Thunder Bay, Ontario

50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

All former members and friends of the congregation are invited to a celebration on

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 2000 D.V.

Join us for a dinner and a program at 6:30 p.m.
For dinner reservations or more information, please call Audrey Grootenboer at 807-935-2778.

Ephesians 2:20-22

DORDT COLLEGE

Director of Public Relations and Marketing Communication

Dordt College is seeking a public relations and marketing communications professional to direct the college's public relations program and to develop and oversee an integrated, institution-wide marketing program. Reporting to the Vice President for College Advancement, this person will be responsible for media relations, advertising, promotional publications, and marketing communication. In summary, this person will be expected to lead efforts at coordinating an effective campus-wide effort to present a strategically effective image and voice that will gain increased support for the college's mission.

Candidates should possess excellent oral and written communication skills, interpersonal skills which enhance team work, and be proficient in research and planning. A graduate degree and experience in public relations is desired but not required.

Qualified candidates with a personal commitment to a Reformed, biblical faith and the mission of Dordt College should forward a letter of application and resume to Susan Droog, Director of Human Resources. A review of all applications will begin in July, and continue until the position is filled.

Dordt College
498 Fourth Ave NE
Sioux Center, IA 51250
Phone 712-722-6017
Fax 712-722-1198
sdroog@dordt.edu

Dordt College encourages applications from women, minorities and persons with disabilities.

Burlington, Ontario

Maranatha Homes

This award-winning Senior Citizen Homes is located close to Burlington Christian Reformed Church and Ebenezer Canadian Reformed Church, with audio hook-up for the Sunday services in every apartment from both churches and a weekly evening video church service presentation.
Local bus service at the door. Monthly rent is geared to income.

Information from:
Rosanne van der Woerd, 3260 New Street
Burlington, ON L7N 3L4 905-681-0311

Classifieds

Vacations | Job Opportunities

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Joan & Mike Havinga
905-358-3534
e-mail: mhavinga@becon.org

Large waterfront cottage in quiet area on Georgian Bay near Meaford, Ont.
- Two bedrooms
- Sleeps 6-8
- New 3 pc. bath, carpets, etc.
- Glassed in front porch
- Weekly, monthly rates
- No smoking or pets

Call Greg at 519-538-5581 or gregayrh@bmts.com

Visiting Victoria?
Furnished one bedroom apartment available for sublet July and August. Quiet, central location. $600 per month, partial month negotiable.
Contact: J. Boer
250-384-9907
ajboer@home.com

VACATIONING?
Quiet country home. Close to Meaford, Ont. On Georgian Bay. Minutes from swimming, fishing, golfing, boating and cycling on The Georgian Trail. Three bedrooms, two baths. Fully furnished. No pets.
Call 519-538-1634

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by Rev. Bassam Madany

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How to relate the gospel relevantly to the Muslim heart and mind.
Also available — essays on Understanding the Middle East ($1.50).
Write:
The Back to God Hour
P.O. Box 5070
Burlington, ON
L7R 3Y8

PASTOR OF YOUTH MINISTRY

First Christian Reformed, a large, established church seeking to be a missioning community is looking for a full-time youth pastor to join our growing multi-staff ministry. This spiritually mature person will have biblical training, gifts of teaching and a demonstrated ability to engage in a relational-style of ministry with youth and their parents. This person will recruit, lead and equip volunteers engaged in our ministry with youth Grade 8 and older. For information about First CR and this position direct your request to:

phone: 604-530-5959 e-mail: hdejong@uniserve.com
First Christian Reformed Church
20525 - 72nd Ave.,
Langley BC V2Y 1T2

EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT
Diaconal Ministries in Eastern Canada

Diaconal Ministries in Eastern Canada has an opening for a temporary full-time Executive Assistant in the Burlington office of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. This position is for an initial period of 6-9 months, effective August 1, with the possibility of becoming a regular full-time position. The successful candidate will possess the following abilities:

- Strong interpersonal skills
- Ability and experience in event planning
- Communication skills, written and verbal
- Computer skills and desk top publishing (preferred)

If you have a passion for diaconal ministries and would like to assist in shaping a vital, positive ministry with the deacons of the Christian Reformed Church, send resume and letter of application to:

Ben Vandezande
c/o Diaconal Ministries
3475 Mainway Drive
PO Box 5070 STN LCD 1
Burlington ON L7R 3Y8

For more information contact Ben at 905-937-4603
or e-mail: dmec@compuserve.com

Applications are due by June 19, 2000.

NEW YOUTH DIRECTOR POSITION AVAILABLE

The First CRC of Chilliwack, on the eastern side of the scenic Fraser Valley in B.C., is in immediate need of a person to help educate and inspire our youth. We're looking for an active and spiritually mature person with the gifts, skills and desire to lead us in our children's and youth ministries. The successful applicant will have the desire to motivate and teach/lead an energetic group of youth that are eager to discover and use their spiritual gifts.

For a full Position Description or more information, please call us at 604-792-2517, fax us at 604-792-2538, or e-mail us at firstcrc@uniserve.com. Application may be sent:

Re: Search Committee
9800 McNaught Rd
Chilliwack BC V2P 6G2

REDEEMER CHRISTIAN HIGH SCHOOL

in Nepean (right next to Ottawa), Ontario is inviting applications in the Social Sciences/English and in the Mathematics/Computer areas for the 2000-01 academic year. If you are interested in teaching in a small, dynamic, visionary school in a beautiful building located in a very interesting city please send your letter of application and resume, including references to:

The Principal
Redeemer Christian High School
82 Colonnade Road North
Nepean, ON K2E 7L2
phone: 613-723-9262
e-mail: principal@rchs.on.ca

Teachers with the Ontario Teaching Certificate and the Ontario Christian School Teachers Certificate will be given preference in hiring. A living relationship with Jesus Christ, a love for your subject area and a passion for students is essential.

HORTICULTURAL SALES

Ambitious wholesale nursery in the Niagara region has an opening for a sales position in the Mid-West U.S.A. Position requires calling on Garden Centres providing them with a complete selection of nursery stock. We provide a strong, brand name program, along with a very extensive and colorful promotional program. Person must be able to develop existing accounts and establish new accounts and have a strong desire to succeed. Strong communication skills, ability to work as a team, and sales experience is necessary. Overnight travel is involved. We provide excellent remuneration, incentives, and benefits. Please send resume with references and salary history with complete confidence to:

John Langendoen
1000 Balfour St.
Fenwick ON L0S 1C0

WANTED: PASTOR OF YOUTH MINISTRIES

HELP! HELP! *(Acts 16:9b) Come over to Brighton and help us!*

We have 196 reasons why we need you! Would you like to become part of a team ministry? We are a vibrant, enthusiastic and growing congregation. We also offer many community opportunities. The potential is enormous. If you are interested in coming to Brighton and helping us, please send your resume to:

Linda Jeronimus — Chairperson of the Youth Pastor Search Team of Brighton Fellowship CRC, Brighton, Ontario.
Address: Box 984, Brighton ON K0K 1H0
E-mail: youthpastor@joshua.org
or check our church web page at: **joshua.org/brightoncrc**
Deadline for application is June 15, 2000

GREENHOUSE GROWER

We are a well established, medium sized greenhouse operation in the Niagara area, producing seasonal potted plants and some cut flowers. We have an immediate opening for a greenhouse grower.

This opening provides an excellent opportunity for an experienced and mature applicant. Qualifications include a minimum of three years experience in a similar production environment and a proven track record. There is a house available for the qualified applicant.

For more information or an interview contact:
Brian van Staalduinen at 905-643-2002
e-mail: brian@staalduinen-floral.com

Calendar of Events

Items appearing in this column are run free of charge if they advertise an admission-free event, if they accompany an ad for the same event, or at the discretion of CC. In case of free listing, space limitations apply. The charge otherwise is $7.50 per line, or $1.50 per 1/3 line, per insertion.

June 14	Hollandse Dag at **Moorefield** Community Centre, Ont., 10 a.m. Speaker: Rev. John Verhoog. (#)
June 14	Hollandse Dag, 10 a.m., First CRC, **Kingston,** Ont. Speaker: Rev. Carl D. Tuyl. Topic: Humor en Wijsheid in Ouderdom. For info, call 613-546-5615. (#)
June 16	Retirement Open House for Treena Sybersma at 7 p.m. at **Georgetown** District Christian School. For more information, call 905-877-4221. (See display ad May 15 issue). (#)
June 16	Retirement reception for Mel Elzinga at Smithville Covenant Christian School, **Smithville,** Ont. (See display ad in issue.) (#)
June 17	Retirement Celebration for Luke Janssen, Laurentian Hills Christian School, **Kitchener,** Ont. RSVP by June 1 to 519-576-6700. (See display ad May 29 issue.) (#)
June 17	Calvin Christian School, **Hamilton,** Ont., 10:30 a.m., Ground breaking ceremony for new school building at 547 W. 5th St. Call 905-388-2645 for more information. (#)
June 17	Annual Grunneger Picnic, **Rockwood,** Ont. at Grand River Conservation Authority from 10 a.m. For information, call 519-235-0719. **(#)**
June 17-18	50th Anniversary Celebration at **Drayton** CRC, Ont. For more info, call Alice at 519-638-3902. (See display ad May 15 issue) (#)
June 20-23	Dealing with Difficult People training event at UW, **Waterloo,** Ont. See Display ad Apr. 17 issue. (#)
June 29	Farewell for Bill Hordyk at **Wyoming,** Ont. Fair Bldg. 7:30-9 p.m. for all graduates, supporters and friends of John Knox Christian School, Wyoming. (See display ad June 12 issue) (#)
July 1	Frisian Picnic, 11 a.m., Pinehurst Conservation Park, Hwy. 24A, **Paris,** Ont. (#)
July 14-15	Conference on Worship & Church Music, Redeemer College, **Ancaster,** Ont. Registration deadline by June 16. For more info, call Deb Polman at 905-648-2131. (#)
Aug. 4-7	First CRC of **Rocky Mountain House,** Alta. is having a church campout as part of their 50th Anniversary celebrations. For more information, call 403-845-6067. (#)
Aug. 12-13	**Brooks,** Alta. CRC 50th Anniversary celebration weekend. Church picnic on Sat., commemorative services on Sun. Please RSVP to Lis if you plan to attend at 403-378-4571or llyzenga@eidnet.org

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(705) 383-2930

"JUST DESSERTS"

An evening of fun, fellowship and farewell
in honour of

BILL HORDYK

WHEN - Thursday, June 29, 2000
WHERE - Wyoming Fair Building, Main St., Wyoming, Ont.
TIME - 7:30 - 9 p.m.

WHAT - Loads of fun, an opportunity to sample over 40 desserts and refreshments.
WHO - All graduates, supporters and friends of John Knox Christian School, Wyoming, Ont.

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CELEBRATING 50 YEARS!

The First Christian Reformed Church of Rocky Mountain House, Alta.
is celebrating their 50th anniversary.

Please join us in our joyous celebration
October 7 - 9, 2000 (the Thanksgiving weekend).

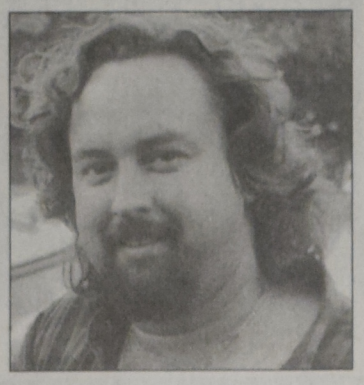
We will be having a church campout
the weekend of August 4 - 7.
(Join us then if you are unable to make it in October.)

For more information, call 403-845-6067.

You are cordially invited to attend a
RETIREMENT RECEPTION FOR
MEL ELZINGA
Administrator and Teacher in Christian Education for 34 years
on **Friday, June 16, 2000,** at
SMITHVILLE COVENANT CHRISTIAN SCHOOL
6470 Regional Rd 14, Smithville, Ont.
Open House: 7 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.
Program: 8:30 p.m.
For more information, please contact Mrs. Joyce Riewald
905-957-7796, home 957-7554
or e-mail ajriewald@aol.com

News

Jubilee sparks resurgence of faith



CC FILE PHOTOS

Participants in the recent Toronto Jubilee conference: Bruce Voogt (left), Peter Noteboom and Arie Van Eek.

John Hiemstra

TORONTO — "I hear people say: 'I'm reading the whole Bible again with new eyes! I hadn't read this text before!' It is wonderful to see people's renewed engagement with Scripture."

When Dr. Sylvia Keesmaat, Senior Member in Biblical Studies at the Institute for Christian Studies, spoke these stirring words at a recent conference on the theology of Jubilee, she cut to the heart of what the Jubilee Initiative is all about: deep faith. That good news was abundantly evident at this conference, entitled "The Vision and Practice of Jubilee: Biblical Hopes and New Beginnings."

Held May 9 to 14 in Toronto, the event enabled social justice advocates to engage in deep biblical and theological reflection. Christian Reformed participants found it lived up to its sub-text: "Biblical Hopes and New Beginnings."

Rev. Arie Van Eek, retired former executive director of the Council of Christian Reformed Churches in Canada, sees a "distinct shift" occurring in the Canadian church social justice movements. They are "taking seriously the word of God. They are looking at the text again."

This was already evident at the initiation of the Jubilee effort, says Van Eek. When the inter-church coalition staff came up with Jubilee as a theme, they soon decided to form a theological commission on Jubilee as one of three central components of the initiative. The other components are the better-known debt reduction drive and public education campaign.

Jubilee theology committee member Sylvia Keesmaat highlights the importance of the biblical jubilee themes of *rest for the land*, *redistribution of wealth*, and *release from bondage*. While these themes pose a huge agenda today, Keesmaat stresses that "we can't achieve it, God needs to achieve it."

In the closing liturgy, Nicaraguan Baptist Manuel Morales noted that in his experience "this is the first international ecumenical event that had a consistent flow of liturgy and prayer throughout the entire event."

The international, trilingual, Jubilee Theology event was hosted by the Canadian Ecumenical Jubilee Initiative in cooperation with the Institute for Christian Studies, Emmanuel College of Victoria University and the Faculty of Theology of University of St. Michael's College, University of Toronto.

Almost 150 delegates gathered from denominations across Canada, including the mainline Roman Catholic, Anglican, United, Evangelical Lutheran and Presbyterian Churches, as well as the Christian Reformed and Mennonite churches. Other delegates came from churches in Argentina, Nicaragua, Zambia, Fiji, and Nigeria. Participants were also drawn from the various inter-church task force staff.

CRC and Jubilee theology

Reinder Klein, Coordinator for Church in Society of the CRC in Canada, is gratified to see the helpful role played by people grounded in the Reformed understanding of the Scriptures. He points to ICS personnel, Sylvia Keesmaat and Connie Kuipers, as well as Citizens for Public Justice staff, Bruce Voogd and Harry Kits.

The CRC can learn a lot from the Jubilee initiative, Klein notes. "It can learn that unless theology is theology-in-action, it will remain a dead academic exercise. Scriptural injunctions must translate into practical application, that is when a cup of cold water actually goes to those who thirst."

As a result of Jubilee 2000, Klein observes, "Christians become eager to change and address systemic and structural injustice. That is exciting! That is the reformed tradition of transforming culture."

The importance of the Jubilee 2000 movement, says CRC member and Canadian Council of Churches employee Peter Noteboom, is that it "represents a contemporary confessional approach to social justice action. Jesus' mission as told in Luke 4 forms the basis for all our reflection and action."

Theology in action

Conference participant Peter Vander Meulen, Coordinator of Social Justice and Hunger Action for the CRC, used to think that CRC theology did not need to be rethought, merely applied to problems like poverty. Today, he thinks a lot of CRC theology is "not a driving force, not a theology of action."

Theology should push forward

Vander Meulen thinks too much Reformed theology tries to conserve the past and protect from a hostile world. "Too often, theology holds back rather than pushes forward. The Jubilee theme could turn this on its head. Biblical Reformed theology can push ahead and cut new trails that are not defensive, that do not circle the wagons."

"We are on the winning side as the CRC, economically, socially, and politically," Vander Meulen notes. "We are winners. Winners don't risk, they act to protect and save themselves and their position. We're doing everything right, taking in refugees, raising our kids, we are well off. So why turn the world upside-down?"

The Jubilee initiative reflects on the biblical message about the poor and oppressed, Vander Meulen argues, and thereby challenges Reformed theologians to engage with other theologies. "We can both contribute and learn."

The CRC needs to develop "a theology of action that is fundamentally Biblical and Reformed, and renewed in such a way that it is understandable to a wide range of people. Jubilee theology can help the church, give the church a new way to rethink some of our kingdom theology. Doing so will give us new energy and impetus for action."

Citizens for Public Justice employee Bruce Voogd agrees. He finds the "Jubilee theme offers the Church fresh insights into the Scriptures, which call for redemptive action on behalf of those who profess faith in a risen Lord."

Klein agrees. "Part of my excitement in this shift is a hope for the CRC to get beyond its historic preoccupation with eternal discussions of church order and doctrine."

Jubilee renewal of culture

The ultimate point of biblical theology is; of course, to participate in God's renewal of the world. Michel Beaudin, Professor of Social Ethics at the University of Montreal, notes that Jubilee is already penetrating our public life.

"The unilateral logic of 'interest' is being influenced by the spirit of Jubilee. The real vocation of the Church is to re-connect with God. Faith is not a private matter but another Way in society."

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News Digest

Chickens guard border

TORONTO — Canada's newest border guards don't mind if you call them chicken — because that's what they are. Hundreds of common hens are being enlisted by the federal government to carry out sentry duty on the U.S. border, reports the *National Post*.

Health Canada hopes its feathered force — stationed in chicken coops along 2,500 km of the border from Saskatchewan to New Brunswick — will work as a low-tech early warning system against the fatal West Nile virus that threatens to spread from the U.S. this summer. If the chickens are bitten by infected mosquitoes, the virus will show up in blood tests on the birds.

Pot growers sought

OTTAWA — Allan Rock is looking for pot. In early May, Rock's Health Department released the terms of a five-year contract it plans to give a Canadian supplier of marijuana by this summer. Whoever gets the tendered contract will have to provide high-quality dope, and security will be tight, reports Southam Newspapers. Anyone who has run afoul of drug laws in the past 15 years won't be permitted to hold a key job in the project.

The marijuana will be used for clinical research trials to gather scientific evidence on whether it is safe and effective for patients to smoke marijuana for medicinal purposes.

Pie in the face

MONTREAL — Throwing a pie in someone's face is now a criminal offense. Judge Louis-Jacques Leger, of the Montreal Municipal Court, found Patrick Robert and Benoit Foisy guilty of assault for tossing a cream pie in the face of Intergovernmental Affairs Minister Stephane Dion recently. Leger gave the pair six-month suspended sentences, prohibited them from having any contact with Dion during that period, and ordered each to complete 50 hours of community work, preferably in a soup kitchen.

Robert and Foisy are members of a Montreal group, Les entarteurs, known for throwing pies at actors, celebrities and politicians, reports the *Montreal Gazette*. They had argued that the pie-throwing was not an assault, because there was no ill-intent, and Dion was not hurt.